A Critical Look at the Evaluation of an Experiment in French Schools

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Abstract: *This article takes a critical look at the evaluation implementing measure within 10 French schools changing school climate and bullying among peers.*

During 26 months the teachers and staff have been trained to improve communication teacher / staff / students.

The aim was to measure the impact of training on the school climate by taking into account the situation of each institution at T0, T1 and T2.

If the evaluation reveals a transformation of the ways of being and to observing improving school climate, it has its own limitations, which must be taken into account to modulate the comments and analysis.

Keywords: *Training, Experimentation, Evaluation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

A 26 month[1] experiment aimed at training the staff, all volunteers (school heads, teachers, security or service personnel) in NVC (*Nonviolent communication*[2]) of ten schools (8 primary and 2 secondary) was carried out in the Dioceses of Blois[3] in France, in the framework of a project financed by the FEJ (Fund for Research on Youth)[4].

The purpose of the proposed training was to contribute to improving the school environment and the well being of the students while also striving to tackle school violence. This training was structured around six principal objectives.

The first aimed to develop the necessary relational competencies for living harmoniously together. It was thus a question of permitting the school staff to acquire knowledge and competencies to implement, among themselves and with the young students and their parents, a mode of relation and communication which would foment well being, mutual respect and cooperation.

The second objective sought to develop a harmonious climate for the adults among themselves. Rather than considering the staff as distinct entities segregated according to their status and role, the aim was to encourage their capacity to create bonds among all the school staff members, to positively manage conflicts, to cooperate and to mutually support one another as a team. A harmonious climate of the adults among themselves constitutes a factor for the prevention of youth harassment as shown in recent research projects like the one carried out on the victimization of the staff at Seine-Saint-

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1 From September 2012 to December 2014.

2 http://nvc-europe.org/SPIP/ (Page consulted on 30/05/2015).

3 This project involved 10 private Catholic schools in the Loir-et-Cher region in France :http://www.catholique-blois.net (Page consulted on 30/05/2015).

4 Project APSCO 4_04 :http://www.experimentation.jeunes.gouv.fr/1164-developper-le-bien-vivre-ensemble-avec-la-communication-non-violente-pour-prevenir-le-harcelement.html (Page consulted on 30/05/2015).

Denis (Debarbieux and Fotinos, 2012). This survey showed, among other aspects, that the staff themselves could be victims of harassment on the part of other members of the team, and that these behaviours and dysfunctions had an effect on the behaviour of the students, because of the environment which they generated and the example that they offered.

The third objective was to develop good relations between adults and students. In this sense the aim was to develop the competence of the adults to establish relations with the students based on mutual respect. The starting hypothesis was that the vertical authoritative way of functioning did not permit conflict resolution. A type of authority based on mutual respect should permit better communications and help to prevent harassment, as one of the reasons for harassment is the reproduction of previously suffered power relationships on those who are weaker (Smith and Sharp, 1994).

The fourth objective aimed to develop good relations among the students themselves. The objective was therefore to develop the competencies of the adults to:

- Moderate the moments devoted to good relations in class (hours spent in class) and transmit relational competencies which allow for respect for each individual (awareness of the other and capacity to empathize, self-awareness, awareness of one's emotions and the positive management of conflicts),

- Moderate moments for listening to the expression of emotions, recognizing needs and leading the students towards a more respectful way of treating themselves and others,

- Accompany the initiatives of the students in which they can be agents of good relations and thus permit them to use their power in a constructive manner.

The fifth objective was to develop a harmonious way to «experience conflicts together », firstly by developing the competencies of the adults and the students to manage conflicts between 2 individuals with mediation; then by experimenting in combination with the existing disciplinary measures, with a restorative system of justice for managing disrespectful behaviours. This restorative system of justice is both a way to manage violent events and a preventive factor against re-offending.

The sixth objective for developing a harmonious climate among the educational actors aimed in this context to encourage bonds and quality relations among all the educational professionals (school staff, parents, educators in contact with the students outside of school) to develop cooperation in the interests of youth education.

Two workshops on awareness were organized for the staff introducing them to *Nonviolent communication*, and 12 training days were organized for the volunteers, 66 members of staff out of 98 in 2013-2014 and 68 out of 97 in 2012-2013 received NVC training.

Like all projects financed by the FEJ this one was divided into two parts: on the one hand the experiment itself, that is the staff training and, on the other, the evaluation of the experiment and the evolution of the school environment.

The experiment will not be discussed here but rather the data collected in the context of the evaluation, using not a description of the results but a critical second look at the data collected and the interpretation which can be offered without running the risk of over-interpretation (Eco, 1992, 1995).

The article will be divided into three parts: the first will present the proposed experiment, the second the protocol and the evaluation tools implemented, the third will be a critical re-think underlining the precaution that should be exercised when interpreting the results before drawing conclusions.

2. METHODS

2.1. From the Experiment to the Evaluation

2.1.1. Presentation and Context

The project financed by the FEJ had to include an evaluation structured in three phases: *ex ante* before the training, during the staff training period and lastly after the training, *ex post*.

In general the epistemological bases of the evaluation carried out are those that were synthesized by the Campbell group (*Campbell Group for Crime and Justice*), which in the humanities, and particularly in violence and delinquency prevention research, come from the *Cochrane Collaboration* (see, for example, Blaya, et al, 2006 or also, Gottfredson, 2001). This evaluation aimed to give priority to the potential reduction of the phenomenon of harassment among peers and consisted of:

i. A reproducible scientific measurement of effect (*effect-size*) of the « *Nonviolent communication*» prevention programme using quantitative and qualitative methods.

ii. This measurement also included the effects of the improvement in the school climate judged both by the students and the staff, as a high correlation has been demonstrated between the quality of this climate and harassment at school (Benbenishty and Astor, 2005, Ortega, 2010 or also, Debarbieux, 2011).

iii. Additionally the consistency with which the programme was implemented and its acceptance in the field was monitored by direct observation (in particular of the training sessions), by focus groups and by in-depth interviews. The aim was to throw light on the facilitating elements, or conversely the obstacles, encountered by the programme.

The final analysis aimed on the one hand to verify if the programme could be judged as efficient, promising or inefficient (for example with an increase in the phenomenon) and, on the other, to show either the conditions for improving the programme or the possibility of it being generalized.

Harassment in schools is one of the essential international scientific loci of research on the phenomenon which is commonly called « school violence ». Beyond a solely criminological approach (although many criminologists are interested in the topic), it is the object of increasing interest due to its serious consequences which are being recognized in educational terms, like dropping-out (Fortin, et al., 2004), absenteeism or academic failure (Blaya, 2010); in terms of mental health, like depressions and suicide attempts; and in terms of public safety, in association with delinquency (Farrington and Ttofi, 2011 ;Ttofi, et al., 2011). Research on harassment and on the effect of programmes tends to be more interested in the context effects (Benbenisthy and Astor, op. cit.). In this framework, it is particularly interesting to study how a programme of the NVC type can be applied, adapted and implanted in a French school context which may be reticent. Victimization surveys have become the main method used worldwide for this topic after the pioneering and oft repeated surveys of Gottfredson in the USA (Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 1985).

2.1.2. Protocol and Evaluation Method

The evaluation protocol is based on the fact that it is difficult to shed light on harassment among peers at school. In fact there is a large gap between on the one hand the administrative alerts linked to this harassment and in the wider context school violence, and on the other the reality for the victims. Harassment is a series of repeated heterogeneous acts of micro violence which include both direct physical or verbal violence, more symbolic aggressions, damage to property, and, finally violence with a sexual connotation (forced undressing, unwanted kisses, etc.).

The adults (school directors, teachers, different members of staff, or parents) cannot understand the full extent of the problems experienced by the students because first of all, a certain number of aggressions do not take place in front of them, they have a tendency to underestimate the consequences (for the victims as well as for the aggressors) and, finally, they are often incapable of understanding them in their continuity and their repetitive character (Elton, 1989).

For these reasons the methodology used was that of the survey of victimization which is the only one which permits a deeper understanding of the topic (Killias, 1991). To carry out the survey the point of view employed is that of the victim, considered as a privileged informer, instead of focussing the research on the aggressors as proposed by Zauberman and Robert (1995). The aim was to evaluate the prevalence of diverse acts of victimization, by identifying them, and the way in which they are repeated and combine to form « harassment », that is oppressive multi-victimization (Wendell, 1990; Debarbieux, 2011).

The quantitative survey included, among others, a module on the perception of the school climate measured using attitude scales which permit the calibration of this climate in a composite index[5] (SCI). The experimental hypothesis was in fact that NVC would have an effect on the school climate as measured by the SCI and would later on, or concomitantly, lower the rate of harassment and diverse aggression among peers.

The whole evaluation device aimed to respond to the final objective: to provide a clear response to a possible replication and generalization of this programme, with or without a change in form and/or

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5 On the method of the School Climate Index: Debarbieux, 1996.

contents or, in contrast, to try to explain the reasons for its ineffectiveness and/or its potential negative effects.

This victimization survey was carried out before the programme was implemented (T0 in September-October 2012) and after the programme finished (T2 in September-October 2014).

2.1.3. The Prospective Quantitative and Qualitative Indicators for Answering the Questions Posed by the Evaluation

Five indicators guided this evaluation:

a. With regard to victimization the work by Debarbieux (1996, 2003 for example) and the protocols which permitted the execution of the 2011 national survey by the DEPP (Directorate for evaluation, forecasting and performance)[6] at the MEN (French Ministry for National Education) or, the survey also carried out in 2011 by the OIVE (International Observatory for School Violence)[7] on behalf of UNICEF France, have greatly inspired this work through the use of a series of indicators of victimization like the following:

- Verbal and symbolic violence: mocking, insults, threats, ostracism, rumours,

- Physical violence: blows, pushing and shoving, fights,

- Violence with a sexual connotation: forced undressing and unwanted kisses, groping,

- Stealing: simple stealing, stealing with threats, racketeering,

- « Technological» violence: insulting emails, SMS, rumours on the social networks. Technological evolution and the latest published works, like those of the COST international group (European Cooperation in Science and Technology)[8], show in fact the pervasiveness of this type of behaviour even among the very young students from the 3rd Educational Cycle (CM1, CM2 and the 6th year)[9].

These indicators only acquire their full meaning when we consider their combination and frequency. The procedures used therefore sought to identify the analysis of these combinations on their own in order to throw light on the reality of harassment.

b. Related to school climate a series of rating scale questions were used for the following particular points:

- Relations among the students,

- Relations between students and adults (teachers, directors, service staff),

- The perception of learning quality,

- The feeling of personal safety in the school and the surrounding area,

- The feeling of school justice which constitutes an essential component of school climate measurement (Gottfredson, op. cit.).

c. Related to the well being of the staff and students, the available indirect indicators were also used: repetition rate, dropouts, absenteeism, punishment register, stoppages and staff turnover.

d. Related to the perception of skills, the quality of those involved and of the training was systematically researched using for example the Q-sort10 method answered anonymously.

6http://media.education.gouv.fr/file/2011/49/0/DEPP-NI-2011-14-enquete-nationale-victimation-colleges-publics_197490.pdf (Page consulted on 31/05/2015).

7http://www.unicef.fr/userfiles/UNICEF_FRANCE_synthese_violences_scolaires_mars_2011.pdf   (Page consulted on 31/05/2015).

8Research programmes financed by the European Union: http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid55959/le-programme-europeen-cost.html (Page consulted on 31/05/2015).

9 The last three years of primary school.

10 http://www.inrp.fr/primaire/outils/q-sorts.htm (Page consulted on 31/05/2015).

e. Finally with regard to the comprehension and suitability of the programme individual and group interviews were conducted to understand the quality of implementation and observance achieved. The qualitative indicators used in the interview grids were in part the same as those used with regard to the school climate.

2.1.4. Data Collection Tools

Eight data collection tools were used:

a. First of all, questionnaires were given to all the 3rd cycle and secondary students in the schools involved (a comprehensive sample of 3rd cycle and secondary students thus excluding the youngest from this survey by questionnaire). These questionnaires were administered before the implementation of the programme (at T0) and at the end of the programme (at T2). They were given to the entire class, with the students separated by a desk, without the presence of any adult belonging to the school. The administration of the questionnaires was coordinated with the project leader, the pilot group and the senior leadership teams of the schools. Two researchers were present in each class. The administration time was about 25 minutes. It is important to respect this time limit, as depending on age, and also the concentration of the youngest subjects, their attention has to be maintained. This administration of the questionnaire was preceded by a prior presentation and explanation and followed by another (protocol described in Debarbieux, 1996, for example, or Carra, 2009).

b. A questionnaire on the school climate was submitted to all the staff at the schools involved as a complementary tool, similarly at T0 and T2.

c. There was also a systematic collection of institutional data: repeated years, punishments, absenteeism, school evaluations, potential alerts… These data, although quantitative, were processed in a qualitative manner, by specifically observing, on the one hand, their slipping from one category to another, and on the other, the nature of the allegations, the alternative sanctions (restorative justice) proposed and implemented and/or the improvement of the academic level. However with regard to the monitoring of the cohorts and the turnover of the students and teachers very few data could be used.

d. In parallel, in-depth interviews, of the life history type (Bertaux, 1997) were carried out with all the directors and school heads (10 interviews at T2), with a sample of teachers and other members of staff whether or not they participated in the NVC training (20 interviews at T2). There were additional interviews at T0 in order to take into account the point of view of the school heads on their school climate and their expectations with regard to NVC.

e. Focus groups and group interviews were conducted with 3 groups of people who participated in the training, about 20 people.

f. Immersion in several training sessions (secondary and primary schools) was combined with regular visits and more sporadic interviews, during the project, especially at T1 (the year without a quantitative survey) and, in particular, participation in meetings with parents and partners at the 3 sites (1 secondary and 2 primary schools) completed this project.

g. Furthermore, after the administration of the questionnaire at T0 and at T2 collective interviews were systematically organized with the groups of students who answered them, to be able to collect the most important impressions of the young people concerned.

h. Finally, life history type interviews were carried out with 10 of the young recipients.

Although this is not the objective of this article it is important to specify that these data were processed in different ways to be able to compare them a posteriori. The questionnaires and different quantitative data were processed using Sphinx™ [11] survey research software and the data were collected with the SPSS™[12] and LISREL™[13] programmes. The interviews were given two different treatments: on the one hand a quantitative frequency thematic analysis, aiming to elucidate the oppositions and occurrences of what was said and, on the other, a semiotic analysis following the model by Greimas (1970 and 1983) to bring out the sense of the actions but also the role played by each of the actors.

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11 http://www.lesphinx-developpement.fr (Page consulted on 31/05/2015).

12 http://www.spss.co.in (Page consulted on 31/05/2015).

13 http://www.ssicentral.com (Page consulted on 31/05/2015).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Evaluation of the Staff Training Experiment

3.1.1. Beyond the Results … Necessary Precautions

Before discussing the impact of NVC in the schools, it is advisable to consider a number of factors which should be taken into account and which help to interpret the results.

- *Multiple Measurement of the School Climate: from the Evaluation of NVC to the Guidance Tool*

Every time the surveys have been returned and analyzed, either globally or school by school, a certain number of points have been explained, for example, whatever the results:

a. They are not an evaluation of the schools,

b. Neither are they an evaluation of the teachers even though we can sort the results level by level, class by class and school by school,

c. They will not be revealed to the general public,

d. The school heads will be able to use the results as they see fit.

But, in contrast:

a. These results provide the schools with situational (situational state at T0 and T2) and contextual (measurements taken at a precise moment) indicators, reinforced, or at least clarified, by the observations made at T1,

b. They also give information about the evolution of the violence (multiple victimization, microviolence, verbal violence, and others),

c. They establish a map of student/teacher relations and relations among the students themselves, but also the places and moments where and when the violence occurs (like the toilets, the exits, the remote corners of the school),

d. The questionnaires but especially the focus groups and the observations, give a more precise qualitative perspective on the data collected in the questionnaires.

In other words, far from being a normative « evaluation » of the schools and teachers, the results obtained constitute guidance tools which can and should aid the school heads and the teachers, both in their daily functions and in the construction/modification of the school project. However, the evaluation was rarely perceived in this light; especially by the schools which were experiencing difficulties. For example, in a school where the students complained about the working conditions due to the state of certain classrooms (a hole in the classroom floor), the director hotly denied its existence, when we ourselves had organized the focus group and seen that the hole existed:

« That is not true. What you say and write is not true. That hole has never existed » (School head).

In the same school, having arrived early for the meeting, we stayed for about 20 minutes in the car and witnessed, before the classes started, two serious successive fights among the school students. At the beginning of the meeting with the same head, he said:

« We can't see and surveil everything. And what's more the outside is not our responsibility. Did the older children intervene? Then that means that our actions regarding NVC are working. We have managed to mobilise the older children» (School head).

These comments show how difficult it is for some school heads not to feel judged and called into question by the results of the different surveys. At the same school we were astonished to see that the parents let their children out of the car on the wrong side of the road, which on the one hand led to obstructing the traffic on the road, and on the other, to the children having to cross over.

« The people in this area, you aren't from here, they don't have the same culture as us, you can tell them what you like» (School head).

Apart from the fact that the comments on the culture of the people from the area are frankly surprising, it has to be admitted once again that these precise questions on the events which had been observed and confirmed were not considered as useful indicators. Nor did they serve as a basis for

discussion. They were perceived solely as judgments on the management of the school … As the latter included a primary and a secondary school, this school head refused permission for us to have a meeting just with the primary school director, probably seeking to avoid any contrary point of view. The excuse was:

« My colleague cannot answer your questions as she has not been here long enough. She has just taken up her post » (School head).

- *Improvements and Deterioration Not Always in Line With the Investment of the School Staff in NVC*

It is very surprising that schools where a certain number of the staff invests a lot in NVC and in the school project, find that their results in the surveys on school climate, stagnate or deteriorate.

Six factors can explain this.

I. A Snapshot which Reflects the Previous Situation

The measurement of the school climate is only a photograph, nothing more than a snapshot which indicates the well being or lack of well being together with what has been experienced (relations with the staff, harassment, verbal violence, physical violence, stealing, dangerous games, etc.) by the student respondents.

The surveys at T0 and T2 were produced in the same conditions and practically at the same moment in the year (during the first term). The distortions do not therefore come from a « change of scale » with one measurement being taken at the beginning and another at the end of the school year which would make the experiences and events different due to their duration.

They are simply the result of the presence of more or less violent events, situations of harassment or others which have been seen, suffered or perpetrated in the days and weeks before the survey. This snapshot is therefore linked to the context as shown in these two extracts from interviews:

« I didn't have the impression before that there was violence in school. Some kids push and shove but last week there was a real fight. I don't know why. It was against a mate. There were several of them. That's frightening. You think it could happen to you» (Focus group, class CM2).

« In fact it must be said that all this is very contextual. Everything is calm and without anyone really knowing why at a given moment there are incidents. They surprise you. You are not expecting them. And even if you intervene it can be repeated just like that several days in a row. So today you are asking me what I think about the school climate. I would say that in spite of all our efforts I have the impression that it is deteriorating but in answering this I'm not really sure if it isn't because of problems which arose in the last two weeks, because before I had the impression that it was in fact getting better » (Teacher, secondary school).

II. From the Definition to the Individual Perception of « Acts » of Violence

Measuring the school climate using a wide definition of violence suffered or perpetrated is a necessity as shown by, among others, Skogan (1990), Roché (1996, 2001), and Debarbieux (1996, 2002), as it is not in fact possible to consider violence only in its crudest version, that of blows and injuries, whether voluntary or involuntary. As the least little event, or act of incivility probably have spiral effects on the violence triggering a process which leads to more serious violence. Violent acts are in fact a « practical achievement » (Garfinkel, 1967), the end of a long process of subtle and complex social interactions which make up society and school. For what is important in this work is not to limit ourselves to a causal approach which would consist in answering the question of « who commits what type of offense and why? Or even who is the victim, of what? » These questions are interesting and should be tackled. But they do not allow us to understand through what learning events and interactions an individual goes from « normal » behaviour to deviant and/or violent behaviour. In other words they do not reflect the dynamic of the appearance of these acts of violence. As examples:

« I had never been harassed until I defended a mate. After that everyone has been going for me» (Student 5th year).

But this question of « the » definition of violence does not end there. Violence is far from being perceived or experienced in a uniform manner. Thus « depending on whether you take the view point of the aggressor or the victim, of the stronger or the weaker, whether you live in Western Europe or in

a country which is at war, in a sensitive housing project or a chic neighbourhood, whether you are a man or a woman, young or old, whether you have experienced it or not, the perception that each one has of violence is different for all of us to the extent that it can be said to be objective or subjective » (Wieviorka, 1999). Violence is simply contextualized temporally, spatially and culturally. How in fact can we compare the violence felt by the teachers in the Elton report (op. cit.) and the violence experienced and suffered by the different communities which made up the former Yugoslavia in the last Balkan war? What we qualify as violence, or at least what is felt as such, in one society at a given moment certainly does not have the same significance in other places and at other times. The perception of violence also varies depending on the intensity of the victimization and the repetition of the aggression, multiple victimization (Debarbieux et al., 2002). Thus the Elton report on discipline in schools concludes that the principle source of violence for the teachers is still the lack of work, disobedience, disinterest in the class, the little daily annoyances rather than the more «spectacular violent acts » (Bodin, 2005, 6). Much of the violence suffered and described comes more from playing, provocation and traditional heckling (Testannière, 1967) than anomia. This question is often addressed both by the teachers and the students:

« In fact they exhaust me. If I think about it when I talk to other people I often say « they are more violent than before » but is that true? If I really consider it they exhaust me, they aren't well behaved, they don't listen, they heckle, in the playground they push and shove, we have to intervene. But is this really violence? At times I see it like that and at others I am more receptive…» (Teacher, primary school).

« Some say that there is violence and fights here in the secondary school but they don't know what it is like where I live, there they would see what the fighting is like in my area among the young people» (Focus group, class 4th year).

III. The Impact of the Feeling of Insecurity on the Responses of the Teachers and Students

While 18.7 % of the secondary and 56.9 % of the primary students state that they have been victims of violence, the focus groups are not so decisive. Some reveal fears, going beyond their personal experiences:

« It's true that I sometimes am afraid of being harassed or beaten by others. Has that happened to you? No never, but I've heard others talking about students in the previous years who were the scapegoats ». (Primary student, class 5th year).

This extract gives rise to the question of the way in which each student will interpret the questions they are asked like « Do you feel OK at school? » This analyses the impact of the feeling of insecurity (Roché, 1996) on the measurement of the school climate. Many research projects show more or less all over Europe and the world, that if physical violence « in schools » is not on the increase, in contrast, minor examples of violence (incivility, moral and verbal violence, etc.) are tending to multiply. However, these « minor » examples of violence have a spill over effect on the perception that each individual has or may have, whatever their status, whether teacher or student, of the violence and, by extension, the school climate leading to a « phantom of insecurity » (Chesnais, 1981).

IV. Generational Effects

But do we measure the same thing at T0 and T2? The answer is yes. It is really the school climate that has been measured after a time interval of two years in the same schools. It is nonetheless difficult to talk about the evolution of the school climate without introducing some conditioners. There are two essential reasons for this.

The first is that that they are no longer all the same students even if at T0 and T2 they are the students from CE 2 to CM2 and those from 6th to 3rd year who were interviewed. In fact two years later:

a. The students interviewed in CM1/CM2 but also in 4th and 3rd years have changed level and are in different schools,

b. The students from CE2 and from the 6th and 5th years for their part, were not in these schools,

c. A certain number of children have moved for family (moving house, divorce, separation) and/or professional (change of workplace for the parents) reasons,

d. Others leave the private schools for financial reasons, no longer being able to pay the school fees,

e. Additionally others arrive for the same reasons or because of particular expectations of success or guidance which are supposedly better in private education.

It would be possible to list in this way other elements which distort the measurement of the school climate. The school heads estimate this turnover in a range between 30 and 35%.

The second has to do with the teachers and the school heads. There are numerous job changes. They are for different reasons: taking on a function/position again for professional or personal reasons. Thus the perception that people interviewed have of the school climate fluctuates. It is distorted by the experience in the school as well as by the length of time spent working in the school, and the experience of conflict resolution, prior training and continuing training offered etc. There again the turnover is about 30% in the schools. If the survey measures the school climate at T0 and T2, like a photograph, it does not however measure the evolution of the school climate from T0 to T2.

V. The Shifting of the Problems: when Looking Through a Magnifying Glass

There remains the question of the shifting of the problems. This question is clearly defined by the comments of a school head who said:

« The problem is when you emphasize something. Take for example the pushing and shoving in the playground. The pushing and shoving can start as a game and end up with the students kicking each other if the situation deteriorates. When you say « we are going to try to regulate that because we think it is important for the general climate ». In fact things can be resolved quite simply. You need staff in the playground. Everyone paying attention.Some instructions about what to do.A bit of teaching for the students. Except that other things appear that you didn't pay attention to before and which today seem important or intolerable. In the end it's like the myth of Sisyphus, having to always start over again. On one side the problems are resolved, you start to focus on other problems and so on and so forth» (School head).

Finally the school climate, even though it is departmentalized in the questionnaire (well being, verbal violence, physical violence, harassment, stealing, and dangerous games) so that it can be evaluated, is perceived in general by the teachers and students. But, above all, when physical violence decreases, for example, the perception that the people interviewed have of the other forms of violence distort their answers. They may for example affirm an increase in verbal violence without the school climate deteriorating. It is just the phenomenon of putting things under the magnifying glass or accentuated shifting, but not because of the deterioration of the school climate, but because of the work that has been done. The discourse and the actions implemented to talk about and no longer accept violence, in whatever shape or form, simply encourages the students to talk more about it without fearing being judged by the others or how they will be seen. Talking about violence seen or suffered becomes a « normal » act not understood as a denunciation but, on the contrary, as an exchange of views on an experience either lived and/or felt. Many exchanges have taken place on this topic with the school heads, when the survey was repeated at T2. Although some schools learned in the figures of a « deterioration » in the school climate, neither the comments of the students nor those of the teachers and staff, or even more the observations carried out at T1 and T2 corroborated this. It must therefore be accepted and affirmed that there is a distortion of the results due to the greater freedom to speak about things.

VI. When the Schools « Close » their Doors

Two schools refused to participate in the school climate survey at T2. They were two schools which had changed director and were experiencing a great deal of difficulty to manage the classes. They had obtained some of the « worst scores » in the surveys carried out at T0. The observations had confirmed the results. Here we find the question of the visibility of the disorders and the fear of the school heads, even though they were new, of being signalled out as « bad school heads » or « bad schools ». Their concern has two sources which arise from maintaining/having a good image, on the one hand with regard to the Dioceses, and on the other, to the outside, in a difficult economic and social context, where recruitment for small rural schools which are fighting to survive is sensitive. The fact that these schools dropped out of the project distorts not only the global results but also deprives the Dioceses and the schools themselves of guidance tools.

3.1.2. NVC in Question

But beyond these results and these introductory remarks, it is necessary to consider the implications of the experiment for the improvement of the school climate and the work of the teachers.

- *Very Satisfied Teachers and School Heads*

Ninety-seven percent of the staff (average 67: 68 in 2012-2013 and 66 in 2013-2014) who participated in these training sessions declared that they were satisfied with them. This impressive percentage is supported by the remarks recorded during the interviews:

« The training helps me a lot. It helps me to feel more at ease in class and with the students » (Teacher).

« The training has changed my view of things. I am interested … Today I analyze the reasons which have led to the events that I witness much more instead of focussing on the visible violence» (Teacher).

« Yes, in terms of what it has provided … it's undeniable. I try more to understand and I try more to make the students understand and come on board. To find fair solutions for all, to establish a restorative justice system rather than immediate sanctions» (Teacher).

We could go on in this way with a long litany of praise for the contents which seem to have transformed the attitudes and actions of the teachers involved in these training sessions and, in all cases, have been satisfactory for the trained teachers. Understanding/adhering /seeking fair solutions/establishing restorative justice have become very important catch words in certain schools to the point that, in some cases, they have been made part of the school's project and in some way the key stone for their teaching and management system. Here again, let us not delude ourselves, the schools are markedly different, also at this level, depending on the quality of the school director and the commitment of the staff.

- *Adherence which has, however, to be Reasoned …*

The number of staff who participated in the training sessions varies from one school to another. The reason is, on the one hand, due to the number of possible places for the training and, on the other, to the motivations of each individual as well as the school policy. Out of the 10 schools studied, 66 out of 68 members of staff in 2013-2014 and 68 out of 97 in 2012-2013 followed the NVC training. Those who participated in this training embarked on an approach which we could qualify as « pro-situational ». They were seeking solutions and good practice. They were engaged in a process of personal reflection. They wanted to transform/improve their professional practices. They are often very active in their school. Their discourse is therefore not neutral as it corresponds to the strong expectations in the sense of continuing education of a certain number of teachers personally engaged in an important attempt to improve. By extension this means that others are less receptive to this idea:

« NVC in the end implies that the students are right and erases the limits, the frontiers, which is negative for general functioning and does not maintain a sufficient distance between the teachers and the students» (Teacher).

These ideas are taken up in different ways by a number of teachers and, curiously, by those who adhere to and received the training. Some of them also expressed the same opinions in the interviews:

« Well, it's true that a balance must be found among understanding, restorative justice and the maintenance of a certain distance between the students and the teachers» (Teacher).

These remarks indicate several things:

➢ First of all the difficulty of changing from one type of behaviour to another and the need to become « impregnated » with NVC before it can really form an integral part of the teachers' permanent practice,

➢ Later, the malaise of the teachers who have featured strongly in the successive works of Éric Debarbieux. In particular those related to « general disorder» (Debarbieux et al. 1999) and above all on the questions regarding « identity crises » (op. cit. p. 55-124) and the « opportunities and misfortunes of pedagogy» (ibid. p. 143-162).

➢ Additionally the need to construct a global project (for the school), which unites a team (made up not only of teachers but also other staff) in which individual actions (training and practice) will find their expression and meaning but also be supported by the actions of the others. It is in fact a systemic approach to work in the school in which NVC makes total sense provided that it is integrated … in something and does not remain just an individual project/interest. Here again the

works of Éric Debarbieux (2008) are elucidating and the « Ten commandments against school violence» can be read in relation to the implementation, actual or not, of NVC.

➢ Finally there is also a sort of quarrel opposing the « the old and the modern », the supporters of a « firmer » education against those who are more open to new ways of doing things. This last remark brings us to an important limitation of our work, which in order to offer greater accuracy, should/ought to have included more life histories and descriptions of professional practice regarding what occurred between T0 and T2 (Pineau, & Le Grand, 1993).

3.1.3. A First Limitation of NVC: the Adherence of only Part of the Staff

This makes it clear that in the same school the pedagogical concepts and also the normative concepts are very different, or even opposite and are not adhered to by every one. Thus, how can the merits of NVC and above all its contribution be conceived in a school when all the staff do not feel involved?

One witnesses therefore its functioning at different speeds and on different levels. A student can move from a class which is managed using a « very NVC » approach to another class which is organized in a much more « regulated » way in the sense Durkheim gave to the term, that is that what characterizes a deviant act is the sanction (Durkheim, 1893), which is a « normal » response to a « crime ». The ideas of a certain number of teachers are very similar to Durkheim's:

« At a certain moment there must be sanctions. The world is not angelic and it is also our role and our duty to punish to educate. Everything can't be done with discussions » (Teacher).

Durkheim (op. cit., 68) himself said:

« If then this society is armed with the power to judge and punish, it will qualify these acts as criminal ones and treat them as such».

It is therefore difficult to measure the real impact of the NVC, even though they say that they are very satisfied with its contributions, as the members of staff have such different pedagogical and normative conceptions in the same school.

3.1.4. A Second Limitation: the Incubation Period

But also how can the necessary incubation period[14] be measured for the trained teachers to convert « what they have retained » about the training into their actual practice? There are distortions between training and acquisition but also between use and re-evaluation. The reasons are simple: what has each one retained from the training? What caught their attention? What can they do, what do they want to do, what do they accept, and what is it possible for them to do given the respective constraints of the context in which they work? Are they satisfied with what they have implemented? Etc. The remarks of the teachers are very eloquent on this subject:

« Well, in any case we have no illusions and there is a considerable gap between the training we have received and the way in which we can or will be able to put it into practice» (Teacher).

« I am very very happy with this training. Really! But when you go back to your class, how can you put it into practice? Where do you start? It is not so obvious» (Teacher).

« It's an incredible experience (the training). It has been very enriching for me. An opening. But objectively … what have I really retained? How can I put such rich contents into practice? Will I be able to do it in the long term? »(Teacher).

Finally these extracts from the interviews accentuate their adherence to NVC. They show the satisfaction of those who have participated in this training. But they transmit the idea of incubation which could be defined in the following way:

- Accept/be willing to receive the training,

- Train,

- Become impregnated with the elements which make up the training,

- Implement the elements acquired/transform the way of working,

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14 The word has been consciously chosen with regard to the commonly accepted definition of « a period which separates the contamination of the organism by an infectious pathogenic agent and the appearance of the first signs of the illness » http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/incubation/42437#0ifldPm2Oko7DU1m.99 (Page consulted on 26/01/2015).

- Implement these elements in concert/collaboration with others,

- Implement them efficiently,

- Measure the results of their actions,

- Transmit/exchange the knowledge acquired,

- Motivate colleagues,

- Integrate individual projects in a collective action,

- Act in the long term,

- Continue to train,

- Etc.

By defining the « incubation » period one can see that the measurement of the school climate is not able to accurately evaluate the contribution of NVC at T0 and T2. For this it would be necessary to implement a much more in-depth longitudinal study.

3.1.5. From Incubation to Contagion: an Indispensible Path for Giving Lasting Effect to the Action

The corollary of the incubation period is obviously that of contagion. One of the main concerns of the staff is the non adherence or the lack of training in NVC of the colleagues with whom they work on a daily basis. Here again it is impossible to measure this contagion from T0 to T2. Did (or will) the methods used, the narratives reported, the results acquired by those who received this training have an impact on the recruitment of new members of staff in this training ? Did (or will) they have an impact on the school projects. Only time will tell.

3.1.6. Concerns for the Future

This idea of contagion is reinforced by the concerns for the future:

« We have received training. Well, yes that is very good. But afterwards … what will follow. If everything stops there it's like whistling in the wind» (Teacher).

The first concern is linked to the long-lasting effect of the training. If the teachers are very satisfied with the NVC, they also have the feeling that they have personally invested a lot in the training. It has been added to the numerous requirements related to their profession (time spent in class, in surveillance, correcting, different types of meetings, etc.). By adhering to NVC, and recognizing that it has undeniable qualities, practical skills and behaviours which they have to transform into ways of doing things in the long term, and more particularly in doing things together (teachers and students), they feel concern about continuing education. For them it is not hypothetical, it is a real necessity:

« It's certain. We cannot be content with that. In the future if we want to do things better we have to continue with the training. If not we will forget, become de-motivated, and then give up» (Teacher).

The second concern is related to turnover. About 30% of the teachers are new. Those who arrive are seldom trained in NVC. They can be interested/trained in other methods. Here we can see the difficulty of transforming what comes from individual desires into a collective project or a school project. Some talk about making NVC a « trademark » in the Dioceses or at least in certain schools. Beyond the purely marketing aspect, which aims to promote and sell private catholic schools using an approach which is directed towards education and prevention of violence for which NVC is a vector, there is also the desire to really make it part of the school project. The aim is to make NVC not just a tool but also a support for the construction of the project, the cohesion of the staff and the necessary training of the new comers and the requisite continuing education of those already trained. The necessary evaluation of the results that have been revealed and evolution in the long term remains to be assessed. The reflection presented by certain schools in the Blois Dioceses in similar, in the framework of this approach, to the series of « commandments » proposed by ÉricDebarbieux for preventing violence in schools : « You will avoid solitude, you will think about prevention, you will evaluate your actions, you will train your staff » (2008, 109-198). The interests of NVC are also included here, in the long term in the engaged and proactive approach of a certain number of schools and teachers.

3.1.7. Did you Say Practise NVC? between the Idea and the Reality …

There are nonetheless some, at times very important distortions, between interest for NVC, adherence to the principles of NVC, receiving the training and actual implementation. Without generalizing this particular point, a few concrete examples will be sufficient.

The first example: we were waiting in the hall of a school in Blois to return the survey. Two students were fighting, although not seriously, the school director intervened, separated them and took one of them by the arm. He shook him and said:

« You still haven't understood. You will be punished again» (School head).

The principles of NVC are far from being applied in this precise case: the principle of equity, taking the « needs » into account, the immediate sanction or threat of a sanction, etc. However, the director had followed the training and would state in an interview his great interest in NVC.

A second example: while we were interviewing the school head a fight broke out in the playground. The school head interrupted the interview for a moment and intervened. He calmed things down, talked to the group of students who were present, and called the two fighters to his office. He discussed with them the reasons for the dispute and applied the teachings on NVC step by step.

Contradictory examples? Perhaps but not only that. Beyond the apparent contradiction both the interest in NVC and the capacity to implement it are hidden. Did all those who received the NVC training really want to do it? Weren't they, or at least some of them, trying to « do what the others were doing »? Officially adhering to the idea to be well thought of in their hierarchy or at least not to be badly thought of? There lies an evident logic of the actors (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977) who although they agree with the general functioning of the system, nonetheless maintain, in certain cases, personal strategies which are totally opposed to the global project. Remarks from certain teachers suggest this:

« Well, I registered because the school director encouraged me. Left to myself … *A posterior* I found it interesting» (Teacher).

« To be frank I went because I had to but I didn't believe in it. No complaints about the training. But well there is a world of difference between ideas and the difficulties in practice» (Teacher).

This last extract shows two points of view: being part of the training « under constraint » and the difficulty of putting NVC into practice. This interview didn't tell us anything more. It is impossible to know if these difficulties come from the context of the school and/or the class, from the social and professional environment, from a lack of willingness to put it into practice or other different reasons.

3.1.8. When NVC Is Put At Risk by Certain Professional Practices

The focus groups with the students were found to be very interesting for understanding the existing distortions. If the students had difficulties in talking about the victims, or in contrast the abusers, they were full of information about the history of the school, the antagonisms, the places where violence occurred, and teacher/student relations. In the latter case, any over interpretation should be avoided. It must be admitted that it is easy for the students to vilify a teacher or a director or, more simply, for their replies to be over interpreted, in the sense that they do not share the same point of view. Words, gestures and actions are signs that possess one meaning for those that use them and another for those that perceive them. They give information; they say or indicate something to others. If they are both signifiers (that is something which is said, shown or expressed,) and have meaning (the sense we give them), they do not necessarily have the same meaning for each of us depending on our age, our experience, and social and cultural differences. Reported facts can also be a way of getting revenge, among others. But when the facts are confirmed, on the one hand by two focus groups led by two different researchers in two different classes as regards level and age, and on the other, by observation, then over interpretation is not possible. Thus the accusing finger points to habits related to the financial management of the cafeteria, the violence of remarks, the attitude or the gestures of the respective school head. There is a distortion between:

- Saying one accepts the idea of NVC and its actual implementation,
- Speaking to the students about the benefits of implementing NVC and the actual behaviour of the school head,
- What is said to the teachers and the actual behaviour of the school head,
- Etc.

These distortions simply work against the general running of the school, the coherence of NVC, in this precise context, and the duration of a project that practice will condemn in time.

3.1.9. When NVC Cannot Resolve Everything by Itself …

There remain the places and moments where and when violence occurs which NVC can take into account through attitudes, conversations, special listening and attention, but which it cannot really prevent. In other words, NVC is not a miracle cure. It is, as suggested by a teacher « a fantastic tool available to us and which we should be able to take advantage of all together». The formula is wonderful and enables many projects. It remains for the places and moments where and when violence occurs, clearly identified by the students at all levels, to be taken into account in order to improve « well being » and, even more, the respective school climate. This is not an exaggeration, as well being or rather the « lack of well being» given the feeling of insecurity which it generates, strongly harms learning. These "lawless" places and moments reveal, on the one hand, a relaxation of surveillance, and on the other, moments and places which are being neglected, or left with less surveillance. However, some recent works, both French and international[15] underline the link between well being at school and educational success. These "lawless" places and times can only be resolved with increased surveillance and commitment on the part of the staff. In saying this, it must be remembered that the majority of students interviewed (91.6 % in the secondary school and 93.7 % in the primary school) feel at ease in their school and a minority (8.4 % and 6.3 % respectively), that should nonetheless not be considered a negligible proportion, are suffering. In fact almost all those who say they do not feel good at school are victims of violence (in the generic sense of the term) which is repeated (many times very often) and are multiple victims (they bear practically all the forms of violence (verbal, physical, harassment, robbery, etc.)). These students, who are experiencing great difficulties and great suffering, need very special attention (Suldo et al., 2006), are already victims of exclusion and are at risk of dropping out from school which is an important issue as shown for example in the works of Fortin et al. (op. cit.) or Blaya (2010), to the extent that in France the Ministry of National Education has recently made it one of its priorities[16].

4. WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON THE TEACHERS AND THE PEDAGOGIC TEAMS?

Whatever the obstacles and difficulties of implementing NVC these three aspects seem to be essential:

a. The satisfaction expressed by the trained teachers and, beyond that, the motivation which this implies for the majority,

b. The impulse given to a certain number of schools which have transformed this training into the keystone of a school project, the aim of which is not NVC, which is just one means amongst others, but the well being of the students in the schools and the prevention of violence,

c. The impact that the training can have on the teachers in the long term. ÉricDebarbieux (2008) had made it a commandment but many works have underlined, following those of Younes et al. (2011), the « favourable impact of educational practices and the training of the teachers » on well being in the school, the perception of the school climate and success[17].

4.1. A Reinforced Teaching Staff

The training received, even if it is important to recall that we are talking about volunteers, therefore people who are more concerned, more involved, probably than others in the training project, in the search for tools, techniques, or at least resources for improving their work in the school, has helped to reinforce the teaching teams.

If the simple fact of being able to take advantage of some training, which responds to great expectations related to managing the class, managing the students, relations with the students, parents and other members of staff, improvement in the school climate, etc., is a fundamental factor for

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15 Citing among others, http://archives.strategie.gouv.fr/content/bien-être-élèves-NA313 (Page consulted on 26/11/2015).

16 http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid84031/tous-mobilises-pour-vaincre-decrochage-scolaire.html (Page consulted on 26/01/2015).

17http://www.ijvs.org/files/Revue-12/05-Younes-IJVS-12.pdf (Page consulted on 26/11/2015).

cohesion in the schools and also among the schools, being able to receive the training, provides a deep feeling of being taken into account. Certain interviews brought this out:

« It must be said that to receive training which responds to our expectations is not as usual as all that. When the training also allows us to improve our working conditions, and the relations in the school, whether among ourselves or with the students or the parents, it is even more valuable.» (Teacher).

The school heads also confirm the same point emphasizing three particular aspects: the common culture, the freedom to speak and, as a consequence, the capacity to exchange ideas. The training is still just training and is seen as such. None of the school heads or teachers thought that it was a case of « applicable and transferable recipes » as they stand. All insist on the raising of awareness, on the fact of seeing things differently, on considering the aggressors and the victims from other viewpoints, on finding other solutions apart from the normative punishment, on transforming relations in their schools and many other things besides. The training therefore has a positive impact on their behaviour and not the technique itself situating them on a more cultural level than in terms of praxis, even if the implementation of « techniques » is visible. As a matter of interest one school head after telling us how good he thought the training of the staff had been, indicated that he had nonetheless had a moment of doubt:

« Some weeks ago, when I was going to my office, I witnessed a particularly violent argument between two teachers about a problem between the two classes. But verbally really violent. Feeling embarrassed that this argument could be heard by everybody … I told myself: it's not all settled, we still have a long way to go if every time there is a problem, in spite of the training, everyone goes back to their bad old ways! I decided not to react immediately but to leave things to calm down a bit and to call the teachers involved into my office a few days later to sort things out. But surprise surprise! The next day the teachers came to see me to explain that they had lost control of themselves, but that they had realised the incongruity of the situation considering that they had received the training and were trying to implement things in the school, that they had talked about it, that the matter had been totally resolved and that they were aware of the work still left to do … So I can summarise in a few words: it is all settled we have made a considerable leap forward! Before, this type of situation would have been insoluble. Thanks to NVC and being able to put things into perspective!» (School head).

4.2. United Pedagogical Teams

But beyond the teachers, it is the whole staff at the school that speaks the same language and tries to go forward in the same direction. The training has made it possible for them to share a common culture, to have a common language, and team objectives. Certain schools even make it part of the school project trying to favour « a more convivial atmosphere ». But more than that, at least at this level the differences between the teaching staff, the surveillance staff, the cafeteria staff and others have been erased. All the staff tries to advance in the same direction and the training by giving everyone (teachers, students, parents, other members of staff) the possibility of expressing their feelings for example, encourages everyone to participate in the transformation of the pedagogical team.

4.3. Other ways of doing Things…

Many talk about a radical transformation in their behaviour. Some do not hesitate to oppose their « know-how » or at least what they estimated to be their rights before, with « knowing how to behave » in their relations with others (other colleagues, staff, parents or students). Perhaps the most important contribution of the training is this change of focus expressed by practically all the people interviewed:

« I don't see things like before. It is no longer the teachers and the rest» (Teacher).

« I think the training has brought us a lot at the human level, learning how to listen to others, accepting others' opinions, not thinking that if they don't think the same way it is a criticism» (Teacher).

« Yes after the training for me what has changed is being aware that you have to listen to each and every individual to be able to do your work as a teacher well. I tried to do it alone in my corner but in the end I got tired but now by adapting and taking others into account … » (Teacher).

The list of quotes could continue. What is important is the change of viewpoint produced by the training and the transformation into a « way to behave » with others.

4.4. Little « Techniques » which have been Implemented

The observations made have not failed to reveal these transformations. The schools and the teachers have implemented different tools and projects in the framework of NVC which are applied both to everyday occurrences and throughout the year at particular times. We would like to cite the emoticons used by the students in class every day. There is a board where all the names of the students are written and on which they indicate, if and when they want to, their mood that day or at that particular moment. They can talk about it with their class at the beginning of the day. They can explain why they feel like that. During the day they can modify the mood and write if they are tired, happy, sad, annoyed, disappointed, do not agree, and many more. These emoticons, which are especially used in the younger classes, permit each student to express him or herself but also to be aware of the difficulties of the others, of their feelings, of the impact of certain actions or words… before the teacher starts the discussion. Let's give the example of the triangle (musical instrument). It is the musical instrument which signals silence. So that when a student or a teacher finds the noise in the class too loud they sound the triangle to obtain silence, not complete silence, but just to make others aware that a limit has been crossed. The initiative is no longer just the teacher's but also the students'. This makes it possible to focus the students and avoids the teacher having to shout to obtain silence. There again, the action triggers discussion, exchanges, and explanations rather than a simple authoritative act on the part of the teacher.

One school, for its part, implemented a pedagogical project around theatre. It is a school project which involves the training of the teachers for 18 h per year on the subject of NVC. For the students it is a case of 1h30 of « training » in NVC every 15 days. The aim is:

- to organize a common show among all the classes with different ways of presenting the play and non violent communication at the end of the year using sketches of violence and the resolution or not of the conflicts,

- to take advantage of this experience to put things in perspective with regard to conflictive situations, to de-dramatize the situations of conflict, to talk about them in the class group, so that every student can express themselves on the situation, the actions and also present a training/prevention session using theatre.

The basic idea of these theatre workshops is to make the students work on actual scenes from their daily life whether at school or in their daily social life. It is simply a question of Aristotelian catharsis but as one school head suggests:

«Without the NVC we would probably not have implemented this through lack of time, lack of desire, lack of perspective as well but above all because we didn't have this common culture which we acquired with the training».

Finally a last example, another school is planning to bring an educational circus to the school for two weeks for all the students (primary and secondary). The idea is to show, according to the remarks of the school head « the school of life » with the example of the circus, because circus arts are simultaneously sporting but demanding, doable but needing restraint and self control, they are individual but at times need the intervention of others (protecting those doing dangerous activities, exchanges with the public, etc.). The aim is that the children should be able to establish communication among the students, in difficult situations, by moving away from the traditional systems of a chosen group and by upsetting the hierarchies among the students.

4.5. Adapted Time-Consuming Training which has Been Chosen and is both Transferable and Generalisable

The training let's remember is judged to be adapted to the expectations and problems encountered and useful for solving them and equipping the staff, by all those interviewed. The training is time-consuming but all are concerned about whether it will be followed up or not. Almost all hope that it will be. With reference to all that has been said, whether in terms of advantages, response to expectations, impact on the school teams and climate or temporal limitations for implementation, for applicability, for incubation, etc., the training is simultaneously transferable in its form and generalisable to other schools. The experiment took place in private schools and certain factors, like the fact that the parents had chosen this framework for the education of their children, will not be found in other public schools. But the expectations with regard to training, the applicability for the teachers, the transformations experienced and observed with respect to the school climate affirm the necessity of transferring and generalising the experiment.

5. CONCLUSION

Bearing in mind the stakes and the fears linked to the judgments and what was perceived as the evaluation of the teachers and their practice, the evaluation has to be carried out by an outside evaluator. What is more, the data collected constitute excellent guidance tools for the schools provided that they can be explained in detail, contrasted with different tools and above all, commented on with a great deal of perspective as regards daily practice and issues. The evaluation of the impact of the NVC training is in the short term. It must be said that NVC has a very real impact on the motivation and practice of the majority of the staff who have received it even if it is not possible for the evaluation to measure the incubation and contagion periods of the training with regard to the staff and in the schools. The interviews both with the staff and the students and the observations made confirm this. The teams that for the most part are engaged in this type of approach, are united in the search for different solutions which aim to improve conviviality and for a different way to communicate in which everyone, whatever their status, is invited to participate. Professional practice is undoubtedly evolving as shown by the actions implemented every day or throughout the year. The project of making NVC a « trademark » in the Dioceses, or at least in certain schools, would permit, apart from the interest in the action itself, a better measurement of the impact of NVC on the school climate and, beyond that, the prevention of violence, the fight against dropping out, etc. This would also make it possible to measure the difference between « NVC » schools and control schools. Let's not deceive ourselves however; NVC cannot solve everything by itself. It is just one approach among others which help to improve the atmosphere of well being in the whole school and which encourage the teams to unite. It cannot solve social ills, nor family or other problems. At best it can help to better consider the visible effect; violent behaviours for example, not solely focussing on the result but on the whole social process which led to them. Observing the impact on the implementation of daily practices, witnessing the way problem and conflict resolution is applied both in class and in the playground, verifying the direction taken to counteract certain problems like stealing snacks, time in the cafeteria etc., make it possible to « measure » the effect of NVC in the consideration of the way students and conflicts are managed to create a more convivial environment. It remains true that the impact cannot be real unless all the staff are trained and take part, in the framework of a common project, in this type of actions. This necessarily implies four aspects.

First of all, the adherence of all the staff. Today this is not the case. This questions the unity of action not only in the particular school, but also over the years, as the students can move from one « NVC type of management » to another « type of management ». Here we are touching on the necessary freedom of choice of the teacher and the relevance of a programme which may be put at risk because of the non-adherence of some of the staff. Additionally, the members of staff who do not want to commit themselves cannot be forced to do so. What will be the impact of NVC in the long term under these conditions?

Secondly the new members of staff also have to be trained as soon as they arrive. While the old members of staff may be more or less motivated by NVC, and a greater or lesser proportion may be trained, the arrival of new teachers will necessarily disturb the way the whole functions. What solutions can there be if the answer is not to train those who could be volunteers from the moment of their arrival? In time, if the new staff are not trained, the NVC project risks becoming diluted, due to the turnover of the teachers, and constitute just one type of training among others which was proposed at a certain moment T with no follow-up. This point worries the school heads a great deal as well as the staff which is concerned and committed.

It is also advisable to ensure the continuing training of the staff over time an aspect which also worries the school heads and staff. It is seen as limiting because it is so time-consuming but also « too short ». With hindsight and especially experience many members of staff have become aware of their lacunae, the need to continue training, and find concrete problems. All, without exception desire to continue with the training so that « it doesn't all come unravelled over time » (remark by a teacher). If everyone wants this, there remain the problems of the format, the time and the financing which constitute barriers to continuing training requested for the future.

This cannot occur in fact except by including NVC in the school project. Certain schools have already taken this step. The Dioceses desires to establish a trademark, not of NVC but of the school projects which include approaches which favour a better environment, with NVC being a key element in this objective, the purpose of which is to establish better relations among staff, parents and teachers, to

improve the school climate, to fight against dropping out … to improve results in a welcoming school. To include NVC in the school projects is probably a way to contribute to resolving the three abovementioned points.

If the results of this evaluation are not generalisable the transferability (Marshall et Rossman, 1989) of the method is, even though our approach was lacking in a certain number of tools, for example life histories or narrations of professional practice carried out during the experiment. They would in fact have allowed us to define more accurately the choices made, the difficulties found to implement NVC, their opposition … in short to understand in more depth their professional activities. But, above all, to be able to measure the impact of NVC on the improvement of the school climate, it would be necessary to carry out a longitudinal study, associated with the continuing training of the teachers and the systematic training of the new teachers. For this it would be necessary to carry out the study in one or several pilot schools in which 100 % of the staff adhere to the principles of NVC training. But as Karl Popper (1959) suggested an approach is scientific if it is falsifiable (it can be reproduced, the criteria which have constructed the approach are known) and refutable (the results are different from one place to another; from one era to another) and consists of a succession of rectified errors. We should be aware of this.

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