3 Is the direct approach to reducing bullying always the best?

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Introduction

Projects to reduce bullying have had some notable successes, both at local level (e.g. Smith and Sharp, 1994) and in local evaluations of national programmes (e.g. Olweus, 1993, Roland, 2000; Roland and Munthe, 1997). However, the gains have often been short term. When they have been maintained at two-year follow-up, as in the project in Bergen, Norway, it seems probable that progress was maintained by the researchers visiting schools in the follow-up period to give them feedback and to discuss further work with staff (Olweus, 1991, 1993; Roland, 2000; Roland and Munthe, 1997). While adopting a range of procedures, the primary focus of these projects was on bullying as a psychosocial problem. They sought to raise awareness of it among pupils and teachers, to convince everyone in the school community that it was unacceptable, and to describe methods to stop ongoing bullying. The 1996–97 project in Norway (Roland, 2000; Roland and Munthe, 1997) broadened the scope to emphasise the quality of day-to-day classroom management.

The mainly bullying-focused approach described above is consistent with a large body of literature, which has investigated characteristics of bullies and their victims. Thus Olweus (1993) argued that bullying results from adverse home conditions, which create a stable aggressive trait within some pupils. Crick and Dodge (1994) saw a social-skills deficit as the origin of bullying. In contrast, Sutton, Smith, and Swettenham (1999) found empirical evidence that bullies are socially skilled and competent manipulators; this is consistent with other evidence that school bullies are not necessarily unpopular with their peers (Olweus, 1993). The common theme is that the dominant variables relate to relatively stable aspects of personality and/or family circumstances (Olweus, 1980, 1993; Roland and Idsøe, 2001).

We believe that some redirection of focus may be desirable for three related reasons. First, bullying, in common with all other behaviour, is likely to be influenced by the quality of the social and educational climate

of the school and classroom. It may be that the best way to raise teachers' awareness of bullying is to raise their knowledge and understanding of the full range of problem behaviours and their own role in responding to problems. Second, attempts to reduce bullying should be based on an explicit theory of professional development. Third, they should also be based on an explicit theory of pedagogy and school improvement. We describe a small-scale pilot project based on our argument that some redirection of focus may be profitable. Finally, we discuss the possible implications of our results.

Impetus for the intervention

School influences on bullying

The case for programmes to reduce bullying is simple: the emotional and educational damage to victims is enormous; the patterns of bullying behaviour which start at school often become ingrained and associated with serious social problems in adult life (Olweus, 1993). Clearly, everything possible should be done to reduce bullying. We agree, but argue that the direct bullying-focused approach is not necessarily the most effective in the long term. It is not clear that an explicit focus on bullying can address all the factors that may contribute to the problem. For example, the behaviour of bullies and victims may be influenced by aspects of school and classroom management that appear at first sight unrelated to bullying. Thus, erratic and inconsistent marking of students' work is not directly related to bullying but may contribute to a climate that makes it more likely to occur. A more holistic approach is needed.

The classroom behaviours consistently reported by teachers as most troublesome are not bullying but talking out of turn and hindering other children's progress (Wheldall and Glynn, 1989; Gray and Sime, 1989). Surprisingly, bullying seldom seems to attract attention in surveys of problem behaviour at school. That is a powerful argument for campaigns to raise teachers' awareness of bullying and its damaging effects. Numerous studies have identified bullying as the hidden behaviour problem, frequently unrecognised by teachers (Olweus, 1993; Roland, 1998). However, agreement on the often hidden nature of bullying and on its destructive impact does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that high profile, bullying-focused campaigns are the best way to reduce it. Before reaching such a conclusion we have to ask two questions. First, are we convinced that bullying is independent of weaknesses in general school or classroom management? If not, the long-term outlook for a bullying-focused programme would not be good, since the underlying causes

would remain unresolved. Second, how much can teachers reasonably be expected to do? At a time of increasing pressure to demonstrate higher standards, how much extra will they be willing or able to take on? We return to this second question in the section on professional development.

If, as suggested by a large body of literature, the origins of bullying lie in family background and personality, we should expect to find the prevalence of bullying fairly evenly distributed across schools. We might find bullying to be more frequent in certain areas, for example in areas of social disadvantage, but among schools in such areas the distribution should be reasonably even. Unfortunately there is not a lot of research testing this hypothesis. It is clear, though, at least in Norway, that differences between schools in levels of bullying exist and are independent of the degree of urbanisation and of school size (Olweus, 1993; Roland, 1989). At classroom level, too, they are independent of size. Moreover, substantial school and classroom level differences remain after controlling for family issues (Roland, 1998; Roland and Galloway, 2002). In Sheffield, UK, Whitney, Rivers, Smith, and Sharp (1994) reported evidence of significant differences between schools in the amount of bullying reported by pupils, with a modest relationship to social deprivation. However, none of these studies reported sufficiently detailed evidence on the backgrounds of pupils in schools with differential rates of bullying to justify firm conclusions. Within primary schools in Norway, Roland and Galloway (2002) found evidence that aspects of classroom management, as perceived by pupils, had a direct effect on the frequency of bullying, and also exerted an indirect effect via their impact on the social structure of the class. We return to this point later, but note here that in this study family relations were not associated with bullying. Neither the size nor the location of the schools were considered, but these variables have not been linked to bullying in previous research in Norway.

Regarding bullying as one aspect of troublesome behaviour in school, albeit a particularly disturbing and often unrecognised one, opens up a number of possibilities. There is clear evidence of substantial differences between schools in the proportion of pupils showing significant behaviour problems. The most comprehensive data on pupil behaviour were gathered in the classic study of Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, and Ouston (1979). As well as large differences between London secondary schools, they also found clear evidence that behaviour on entry to these schools at age 11 did not predict behaviour at age 14. Moreover, the correlation between behaviour at school and parents' occupation was very low, close to zero. The explanation of the differences lay within the schools themselves and not in the pupils or their family backgrounds. In their study of London primary schools, Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis, and Ecob

(1988) also found significant school influences, though not as strong as in the secondary-school study. The more notable result in the primary study was that teachers rated about 30% of pupils as showing significant behaviour problems in each of three consecutive years, but only 3% were so rated in all three years. The pupils and their families had not changed, but they had a different class teacher each year, implying that, although there is overall agreement on the proportion considered troublesome, teachers do not agree nearly as well on *which* children are disruptive.

School influences on the most extreme minority of pupils whose behaviour results in exclusion appear just as important. Galloway, Ball, Blomfield, and Seyd (1982) found that excluded pupils were a highly vulnerable group on cognitive, educational, family, and constitutional grounds. A large majority had a low IQ, were educationally backward, came from stressful families, and were much more likely to have a history of serious illnesses and/or accidents than the norm. Yet they were unevenly distributed across the city's secondary schools and an exhaustive search failed to find any demographic factors to explain the school differences (Galloway, Martin, and Wilcox, 1985). Again, the explanation seemed to lie in the schools.

Probably due to the preoccupation of many governments and funding agencies with literacy and numeracy, most of the recent school effectiveness studies have neglected the school's impact on pupils' psychosocial development. Indeed, they have largely overlooked behaviour in general, let alone bullying as an example of deviant or aggressive behaviour. The case for regarding bullying within the overall context of such behaviour, and hence as being as susceptible to the school's influence as other problem behaviour, is nevertheless strong.

We have traced no evidence from school effectiveness studies that teachers in schools with the lowest rates of problem behaviour are more likely to have undergone training in behaviour management, let alone that they are more likely to have taken part in anti-bullying programmes. Rather, it seems likely that teachers demand such programmes when the social climate permits widespread problem behaviour and impedes pupils' educational progress. The problem is that many programmes which aim to change behaviour, including anti-bullying programmes, tend to regard the problem behaviour as the primary problem: deal with this and everything else will be all right.

Yet the evidence suggests that school effectiveness and classroom management are infinitely more complex than eliminating or reducing problem behaviour. Certainly that is important, but it cannot sensibly be seen in isolation from school organisation and management, nor from the quality of teaching in the class. In other words, a more holistic approach is

needed. Rutter et al. (1979) drew on the important, though slippery, concept of school climate to describe the interactions among pupils and teachers, among teachers, and among pupils that explained why some schools had such widely varying rates of problem behaviour. Others have used the equally nebulous concept of the hidden curriculum (Galloway, 1990). The point is that school climate affects the quality of teaching and learning, as well as the quality of relationships in the classroom and in other parts of the school. So how can teachers create this climate?

A basis for professional development

No one doubts the importance of professional development. It is needed to keep abreast of advances in technology, knowledge, and ideas. It is also needed to respond positively to changes in public expectations, whether in safety standards or in the educational standards that pupils should be expected to reach by a certain age. Teachers' jobs are complex and they have to address many problems besides bullying. Epidemiological studies have made it clear that teachers face a wide range of problem behaviour in the classroom (Rutter, Tizard, and Whitmore, 1970). Other problems also have a valid claim on teachers' time and, arguably, are even more explicitly linked to educational under-achievement. Boys' poor educational progress relative to that of girls, for example, is a source of international concern and seems to be linked to their attitudes towards education (Myhill, 2002; Arnot, David, and Weiner, 1996). Similarly, anxious or withdrawn children are less likely to be noticed by teachers than are pupils who are disruptive, though they are not less likely to be a source of concern to their parents (Rutter et al., 1970). Perhaps there should be a campaign to raise awareness of these pupils too.

Given the range of tasks facing teachers, perhaps it is unsurprising that agreement on a rational basis for professional development remains elusive. In England, the government's preferred approach has been to identify priorities, for example literacy, link them to targets, prescribe a long list of 'standards' that teachers are required to demonstrate in order to attain a target, provide money for professional development, and finally draw up accountability procedures with draconian penalties for non-compliance. Few educational concerns illustrate better than bullying why this approach is intellectually vacuous in theory and ineffective in practice. There are two problems.

First, the word 'development' in professional development implies the importance of building on existing practice with an existing knowledge base. The core tasks of teaching are to create a social climate which pupils value and in which they want to learn, and to create an educational

climate which enhances pupils' learning. Hargreaves (2001) has summarised these core tasks as enhancing social and cognitive capital. Success is evaluated against outputs, namely evidence about the quality of teaching and learning and about the school as a social community. The latter, of course, includes the quality of relationships and is therefore directly relevant to bullying. A sound basis for any professional development must, therefore, include both the social and the cognitive aspects of teachers' work.

Second, the interrelated professional development tasks of enhancing the quality of learning and the quality of the class and school as a social community are not helped by the apparent government policy, at least in England, of 'management by new initiative'. The tendency of ministers to rush breathlessly from conference to conference, announcing a new major initiative at each one, betrays a deep indifference to how knowledge is acquired and professional practice changed. The plethora of initiatives has had an entirely predictable effect. Local education authorities and headteachers concentrate on the most high profile initiative, in which the consequences of non-compliance are most severe. Usually, these involve targets in literacy or numeracy, or, in secondary schools, improvement in public examination results. Targets in the social aspects of schooling are harder to set. Preoccupied with the high-stakes cognitive targets, a headteacher's solution for all other educational issues, including bullying, is to produce a policy statement, which will satisfy inspectors. To be absolutely safe, a junior member of staff can be allocated the task of recording 'evidence' about the policy's implementation.

This solution is not entirely cynical. Most initiatives, including those on bullying, are perceived by teachers and often presented by ministers, perhaps unintentionally, as 'add-on extras', rather than as an integral part of the teachers' work. Most teachers, however, are already working hard, and indeed many are close to exhaustion. This feature of teaching was eloquently described by Hargreaves (1982) in his observation that while other professionals get tired, teachers get exhausted. Too often, the core aspects of the job are all consuming. Teachers can take on something extra for a short time, but are unlikely to be able to sustain the increased load in the long term. The challenge for professional development is to find ways 'to work smarter, not harder' (Hargreaves, 2001).

The prescriptive approach linking professional development to whichever initiative a minister currently favours leads to another problem. Management by initiative and by accountability produces a climate of fear. Fear elicits compliance but the compliance is based on anxiety and underlying resentment. The chances of beneficial changes in children's classroom experience are minimal. Nowhere is this better illustrated than

		Output quality/quantity	
		Low	High
Energy input	High	Frustration and/or exhaustion	Short-term effectiveness but unsustainable due to burn-out
	Low	Cynicism and apathy	High leverage

Fig. 3.1 Energy input and quality and quantity of output (adapted from Hargreaves, 2001).

in Hargreaves' (2001) model showing the impact of high- and low-energy inputs when introducing a new initiative (fig. 3.1). The quantity and quality of output can be high or low, but if the initiative has a high-profile (high-energy) input, high-quantity and quality output will be unsustainable due to burnout. Only a low-profile (low-energy) input when introducing a new initiative has the potential for 'high leverage', i.e. for levering up standards through sustainable change. This model is unlikely to find favour with government ministers, nor with enthusiasts for any particular project. Yet it illustrates vividly why teachers cannot successfully be bullied into implementing a new initiative, whether on bullying or on anything else. (They *can*, of course, be bullied, but the impact will be short term at best.)

Pedagogy and school improvement

We have argued that the core tasks of teaching are to increase social and cognitive capital. Few things are more destructive of social relationships than bullying. Necessarily short-term programmes to tackle behaviour problems, whether bullying or talking out of turn in the classroom, though, do not usually achieve supportive relationships between pupils. They are more likely to be achieved by improving teachers' competence in the classroom, including their understanding of interactions between pupils. Bullying should be addressed, and addressed explicitly, but within the wider context of social interaction and the learning tasks of the classroom.

The precise focus will vary from programme to programme, but we can identify four common themes. First, the programme should build on teachers' existing knowledge and skills. Second, it should be seen by teachers as helping them to work more effectively and efficiently; in other words it should help them to work smarter not harder. Third, it should

result in demonstrable change in the classroom. Fourth, the emphasis should be on improving the quality of teaching and social relationships rather than on complying with some externally imposed directive.

These four criteria are consistent with well-known work on school improvement. Fitz-Gibbon (1996) emphasises the importance of regular monitoring in order to identify change in the classroom. She also draws attention to the negative consequences of policy decisions that are imposed on teachers without negotiation. She is scathing about much current practice in educational management, contrasting it with the experience of Max Perutz, a Nobel prize winning scientist who describes how 'the MRC [Medical Research Council in the UK] still operates a system in which individual researchers are in contact with individual administrators who become familiar with their work and "do everything possible to help them with their research"' (Fitz-Gibbon 1996: 184).

Priorities will inevitably vary from country to country and from school to school. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify aspects of teaching methods and classroom improvement which are of particular relevance to bullying. In planning research on class-level effects on bullying, Roland and Galloway (2002) identified four potential influences on bullying. First, teachers provide a model for pupils in the quality of care they show for them as individuals. Pupils who believe that their teacher has a caring attitude towards them are less likely to bully others. Second, the way in which teachers implement routines for task-oriented work sends a powerful indirect message about their control of the class as well as an explicit one about their expectations of the class's success in the task. Pupils who recognise their teacher's competence and feel secure in their ability to succeed may be less likely to bully. Third, children are quick to notice how the teacher monitors their progress in curriculum tasks and their social relationships. From the teacher's skill in monitoring their work and their social interactions, students learn what is expected of them, socially as well as intellectually. Fourth, the manner and effectiveness of interventions when problems occur, whether bullying or other behaviour problems, not only maintains learning but also shows the teacher's ability to generate a climate of security and maintain constructive social relationships in the face of obstacles.

A notable feature of these four aspects of a potential school improvement programme is that each can be as relevant to bullying as to other aspects of classroom life. Hence, any initiative to reduce bullying can be multi-dimensional, and we would argue that it should be. School improvement implies improvement in the social and cognitive aspects of teachers' work. As an example of damaging social relations, bullying cannot be seen in isolation from the core tasks of teaching. The benefit

of such an holistic approach is not only that the quality of teaching may be raised across subject areas through a programme to reduce bullying; in addition, it may be possible to incorporate explicit attention to bullying in programmes whose primary focus is on the cognitive aspects of teaching.

A pilot project

Planning and funding The implications of the argument presented above are that attempts to reduce bullying can, and should, form an integral part of wider ranging attempts to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers should perceive an anti-bullying initiative as assisting them in their core work, from which they derive their job satisfaction and for which they are rightly held accountable. Anti-bullying strategies should be introduced with a low profile simply because high-profile introduction is likely to divert teachers from their core work, which includes monitoring social interactions among students. In the short term high-profile introduction may have an impact but it is most unlikely to be sustainable beyond the short to medium term. With these considerations in mind, one of us (ER) planned a professional development programme for teachers with the limited aim of investigating its impact on bullying. Funding was provided by the Center for Behavioural Research, University College Stavanger, Norway.

Selection of schools

The project took place in a town in the south of Norway with over 50,000 inhabitants and with 18 primary schools. In 9 of these schools, a professional development programme for teachers was initiated. The schools were chosen independently by an education officer who knew all the schools in the area and agreed to select a representative sample. The remaining 9 were invited to take part in the survey as comparison schools, and 6 of these agreed to do so. A subsequent check revealed no differences between the experimental and the comparison schools in terms of size. The remaining 3 schools refused to take part for various reasons, such as pressure on staff from other projects.

Characteristics of schools and students

The programme took place from 1992 to 1994. Two comparison samples were selected and two experimental samples.

Comparison Sample 1 consisted of first-grade pupils (aged 6–7 years) in 9 primary schools the year before the professional development programme started (year 1 of the programme). None of these pupils or their teachers was subsequently involved in the programme.

Experimental Sample 1 was the following year's intake of first-grade pupils in the same 9 primary schools as Comparison Sample 1. This was year 2 of the programme. The designated class teachers of these pupils, 1 per class, formed the first cohort (N = 20) of the professional development programme. (In Norway each primary class may be taught by three or four teachers, one of whom is the designated class teacher and teaches the class for a majority of lessons).

Experimental Sample 2 was the next year's intake of first-grade pupils (year 3 of the programme), at the same 9 primary schools. These pupils' designated class teachers formed the second cohort of the professional development programme (N = 20). There was no overlap between teachers in cohorts 1 and 2.

Comparison Sample 2 consisted of first-grade pupils in 6 schools in the same town, which had not taken part in the professional development programme (year 3 of the programme).

Each sample had 300–350 pupils, except Comparison Sample 2, which had 151.

Components of the intervention programme

The professional development programme was based on the argument outlined above that four critical influences on the quality of teaching and learning in a primary school are: the quality of care for individual pupils; implementation of routines for task-oriented work; monitoring children's progress and social interactions; and intervening when problems occur. There were explicit references to the causes and prevention of bullying, but only as part of the wider programme.

For the 20 teachers in each cohort the programme consisted of 4 in-service days over a 9-month period. A handout summarising the content was distributed on each occasion. In addition, there were 15 2-hour peer supervision sessions on lines described by Dalin and Rolft (1993); and Handal (1991). These were held in groups of 6–7 and were led by a colleague trained by the Centre for Behavioural Research. Their aim was to give teachers an opportunity to discuss the practical implications of the theoretical concepts introduced on the in-service days.

Evaluation framework and procedures

An anonymous pupil questionnaire was designed to evaluate the project, with 10 items to answer on a 3- or 4-point scale (the full questionnaire can be obtained from the authors). The first 7 items asked about children's feelings about school and their social behaviour while there, for example, 'Do you help other pupils when they need it?' and 'Do you sometimes not want to go to school?' These were designed to assess the impact of the programme on attitudes and behaviour, which were not directly related to bullying. The eighth, 'Do you feel sad at home?' was included as an item that should not be affected by any change in classroom climate at school; no significant difference between the experimental and comparison samples was expected on this item. A heading 'about bullying' was followed by a standard description of bullying as used in previous studies (Roland and Galloway, 2002): 'It is bullying when a pupil is being hit, kicked or pushed by other pupils. It is also bullying when a pupil is teased a lot by others, or when a pupil is no longer allowed to be with the others, when a pupil is isolated by the others.' The final two items then asked 'Does it happen that you are bullied by other pupils at school?' and 'Does it happen that you take part in bullying other pupils at school?', with response options: never; now and then; weekly; several times a week.

The experimental samples completed the questionnaires towards the end of years 2 and 3, on completion of their teachers' professional development course. The comparison sample completed them towards the end of years 1 and 3. Administration was by the class teacher, who read each item aloud and gave explanations on request.

Because all participants in all four samples were first-grade children, no baseline assessment was practical so there are no pre-test/post-test comparisons. Asking children about their experience of schooling in their first month at school is most unlikely to produce reliable data. The justification for focusing on the first year of schooling was that this has been shown to be a reliable predictor of subsequent progress (Tymms, Merrell, and Henderson, 2000).

What actually happened: achievements and difficulties in implementing the intervention

The programme did not increase the teachers' overall workload. The four in-service days were part of their standard entitlement to time for professional development, as were the peer supervision sessions. In other national school systems, such as the English system, the course would be considered time-intensive. In this sense it could be considered high

Table 3.1. *Mean ratings, number of pupils, t-values, and levels of significance for 10 variables: experimental and control groups*

Variables	Experiment		Control			
	Mean	N	Mean	N	t	p
1. Like it in class	1.48	673	1.40	476	2.36	.01
2. Like subjects	1.63	675	1.45	477	4.70	.00
3. Help other pupils	1.29	673	1.19	476	3.16	.00
4. Not want to go to school	0.61	672	0.77	477	3.14	.00
5. Noise and disruption	1.21	673	1.50	477	6.00	.00
6. Disruptive yourself	0.60	643	0.67	475	1.83	.04
7. Sad at school	0.56	674	0.66	476	2.70	.01
8. Sad at home	0.75	672	0.78	477	0.83	.41
9. Bully others	0.34	672	0.40	475	1.66	.04
10. Being bullied	0.87	675	1.07	475	4.29	.00

profile. On the other hand, no targets were set and the reputation of the teachers and the school did not depend on any stated outcome. The emphasis was solely on professional development. In that sense it was clearly low profile.

Results of the evaluation

Our first task was to compare the results from the two experimental samples and the two comparison samples. T-tests (two tailed) were used to compare the mean ratings on each item. Comparison Samples 1 and 2 differed significantly on only one item, 'helping other pupils', in which Comparison Sample 2 had a higher mean rating. Similarly, Experimental Samples 1 and 2 had significantly different mean ratings on only one item, 'noise and disruption in class', in which Experimental Sample 2 had a higher rating. For all other items, including the two questions about bullying and being bullied, the mean ratings of the two comparison samples were very close, and not significantly different; the same applied to the two experimental samples. We therefore felt justified in merging the two comparison samples into a single sample, and likewise the two experimental samples.

The most interesting analysis involved comparing responses of pupils whose teachers had not taken part in the professional development programme (the merged comparison sample) with those whose teachers had taken part (the merged experimental samples). The results are shown in table 3.1. Here one-tailed t-tests were used, as the hypothesis was that the results would be in favour of the experimental sample; except for

item 8, 'sad at home', where a two-tailed test was used. As predicted, the experimental group's ratings were significantly more positive than those of the control samples, except for 'sad at home', for which there was no significant difference. This supported the view that the other items were investigating aspects of children's experience, which had been affected by their class teacher's participation in the professional development programme. The significance levels were consistently high (p < .01 on 7 items and p < .04 on 2). In relation to the final 2 items on bullying and being bullied, the mean of the experimental group was 15% below that of the comparison group for bullying others, and 18.7% below for being bullied.

Discussion and conclusions

This pilot study was based on our argument that some redirection may be desirable in anti-bullying programmes; specifically, that a more holistic approach to bullying would see it in the context of the range of behaviours that teachers encounter in the classroom, and that intervention should be based on a clear theory of professional development and a clear theory of pedagogy and school improvement. The procedures used to assess bullying were identical to those used in numerous other studies (e.g. Roland and Galloway, 2002). Although the experimental groups reported significantly less bullying, the reduction was less dramatic than in Olweus' (1991, 1993) local evaluation in Bergen of a Norwegian national project, and in the Sheffield project (Smith and Sharp, 1994). It was better, however, than the reduction found in another local evaluation of the national project in Norway (Roland, 2000; Roland and Munthe, 1997). These projects all investigated the effects of campaigns against bullying that focused directly on bullying, even in aspects of the programme that concentrated on prevention rather than on identifying and responding to bullying when it occurred.

Hargreaves' (2001) theory would predict that the reduction in bullying reported here should be more sustainable than reductions resulting from programmes with a more direct focus on the problem. That requires further investigation. Nevertheless, the general picture has been one of considerable difficulty in maintaining the impact of anti-bullying programmes (Roland and Munthe, 1997; Thompson, 2003). If gains are not maintained it may be that programmes have not adopted a sufficiently holistic approach by integrating them into core aspects of teachers' day-to-day work.

A project with first-grade pupils makes baseline data on bullying and other social behaviour impractical, although this does have the

disadvantage of not having pre-test/post-test comparisons, which most projects in this field have reported. Within these constraints, we are confident that the comparison between the experimental and control samples was legitimate. There were no grounds for suspecting that extraneous factors such as parental income or socio-economic status could have biased the results in favour of the experimental sample. That said, we were clear about the limitations in what could be achieved in a small-scale pilot study.

The data on bullying were based on similar procedures to those in larger scale projects. Like them, we had to rely on self-report data. It is difficult to see the alternative when investigating a problem that, notoriously, teachers often fail to recognise. In addition, we obtained other data showing that pupils' perceptions of schooling were more positive if their teachers had taken part in the professional development programme. However, we were not able to obtain observational data about pupils' actual behaviour in class. Nor were we able to show whether pupils' improved perceptions were reflected in better educational progress. More information about the reliability of the questionnaire would be desirable, and it would be preferable for someone other than the class teacher to administer it. None of this necessarily invalidates our results. Nevertheless it does provide a powerful argument for larger scale studies that include reduction in bullying in other age groups as part of wider ranging school improvement programmes, and evaluate their impact on a wider range of educational and social variables.

Longer term effects or evaluation of the programme

This was a small-scale pilot project and it has not been possible to follow it up. Hargreaves' (2001) argument suggests that teachers should be more likely to continue using the professional development outlined above than training aimed more narrowly at bullying. Similarly, it would also suggest that bully and victim rates should remain lower than in more narrowly focused programmes. Unfortunately, resources did not allow the kind of follow-up that would have enabled us to test these hypotheses.

Dissemination and impact beyond the programme schools

It has not been possible to follow up this pilot project with a larger scale study with more schools and a wider age range of students. However, together with the ongoing work of Olweus (2003; and chapter 2), it has contributed to awareness of bullying at school level and at political level in

Norway. Evidence of political awareness came in a 2002 announcement by the prime minister of a further national campaign with 'zero tolerance' of bullying. Olweus (2003) has provided a framework for annual monitoring of bullying levels and, with the large sample provided by participation in the national programme, this will undoubtedly make a significant contribution to understanding the impact of large-scale initiatives.

It has to be said, though, that the programmes encouraged by the Norwegian government are focusing very strongly on bullying rather than on the more holistic approach advocated in this chapter. This is true of Olweus' programme and, to a lesser extent, of Roland's programme in Stavanger. While the latter explicitly recognises the importance of school- and class-level variables that may only indirectly be related to bullying, the emphasis is still on bullying as the primary problem. A larger and more rigorous replication of the pilot project reported here remains an urgent priority.

There is one other way in which the programme has had an impact. The Center for Behavioural Research in Stavanger provides numerous short in-service courses to help teachers in the management of problem behaviour (Midthassel and Bru, 2001). Research on school and classroom influences on bullying (Roland and Galloway, 2002), together with the pilot project reported here, has provided a strong indication that problem behaviour in general may be tackled most effectively, and sustainably, by courses which aim to improve the quality of day-to-day classroom teaching (see Galloway, 2003). This approach is a far cry from the narrowly behavioural courses on assertive teacher behaviour that are currently favoured by many authorities, for example in the UK. Yet here, too, there is an urgent need for rigorous studies comparing alternative approaches with long-term follow-up. Until such studies are carried out, teachers will continue to work in the dark.

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