

RESTORATIVE PRINCIPLES TO CREATE A POSITIVE CLIMATE IN SCHOOLS

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This summer 2011, thanks to the Real Colegio Complutense at Harvard University, this Advanced Research Group will bring Spanish and American researchers together, to work on the following topic: *how to promote socio-emotional development through education*.

In this first seminar we will start with interventions related to *Restorative Principles* and its possibilities to create a positive climate in schools. Later on we will focus on some other approaches and interventions, which I will introduce at the end of my lecture. We hope that many practitioners and researches will join us this summer (both in the seminars and through our web page), as we would like to have as much participation as possible.

This topic is, more and more, capturing the attention of the general public, professionals and academics, here in North America and also in Europe. Schooling has become imbalanced with education resulting in a restricted curriculum and methods of teaching and learning that prioritizes facts over process, exam results over understanding, and academic knowledge over acquisition of social and emotional skills. It is necessary to provide a curriculum and pedagogy that resurrect the primacy of the relationship between teacher and student, and build trust amongst people so that learning can be enhanced and classrooms can become places where social and emotional learning take place. This is both to enhance the quality of life in school, and to better prepare young people for their lives outside of school (Cremin, 2007).

As previously mentioned, this first seminar will focus on Restorative Principles. We start with a specific kind, which is the most well known (at least in Spain): the *Peer Mediation Programs*. We begin by analyzing these programs and how their implementation in educational schools is. In order to have a better understanding of these programs we will continue with a review of the origins and influences of the Peer Mediation model. This aspect will help us understand that the Peer Mediation Programs are one of the options among Restorative Practices which teachers need to know. The socio emotional benefits from these Programs and an unexplored possibility will also be pointed out. Finally what these Restorative Practices or Principles have in common with other Socio Emotional Approaches will be presented, and what are the barriers for their implementation.

I would like now to introduce myself, before starting, not only as academic (from the Developmental and Educational Department) but also as a practitioner for several years. My interest in the implementation of these programs comes from my experience in the juvenile justice system in Spain. After working in a Victim-Offender Mediation Program for seven years, and having experienced its positive effects on adolescents, I expected an easy implementation of this technique in the schools. A very naïve expectation, as I didn't take into consideration the difficulties of working inside an organization, with its own culture and values, and not working only with two or more teenagers in conflict, as I did previously. During the past years trying to train teachers and students to implement Mediation Programs in their schools I discovered some recurrent barriers to achieve it; this presentation will present that knowledge and some of my reflections. It will offer some ideas about how to achieve a better implementation of this socio-emotional intervention, and how to do it in combination with other strategies. I will end with some questions that I would like to work on during this summer with the rest of the members of the Advanced Research Group and with all colleagues who want to share in this journey with us.

1. Peer Mediation Programs and their implementation in Spain

Mediation Programs utilize a third-party person in order to settle a dispute between two parties. It is a structured process in which a neutral and impartial third party (known as the mediator) assists two or more people to negotiate an integrative resolution to their conflict. In the case of Peer Mediation Programs students are the ones who are trained as neutral third parties to intervene and assist other students in the resolution and management of interpersonal disputes. They are trained in interpersonal conflict, active listening, paraphrasing, reframing, and role playing in order to learn how to help in the mediation process. Student mediators learn how to encourage their peers to explore issues systematically and to problem solve. Peer mediators follow a learned, structured process and attempt to elicit and explore underlying issues, such as different perspectives or points of view in the conflict.

The implementation of these programs is very different from one educational setting to another. There are three variables that can help us understand the different possibilities: Who are the mediators?, Who trained the mediators?, and is the Mediation Program used only as a specific tool or as part of a whole school approach?

Related to the first variable (*Who are the mediators?*), some schools use only adults as mediators (teachers, parents or non teaching staff); some others also include adults from outside the educational context (community mediators), because the adults in the school haven't been trained or because they are dealing with very difficult cases, and don't feel confident enough to manage the extreme situations. Some have implemented the peer students as mediators; and finally some schools have a combination of the previous alternatives (combine an adult and a student as the two mediators if the mediation process requires it). As an example of the importance of these differences, Theberge et al. (2004) pointed out a situation where school teachers as a group had not been trained in mediation skills and techniques, and although the teachers say that they support the use of mediation, adults in the building did not necessarily model or even encourage mediation to resolve conflicts. This problem will be addressed later when we analyze the necessity of global approaches, and to include other Restorative Practices, not only mediation.

The second variable (*Who trained the mediators?*) offers, at least, two possibilities: the school counselor as the trainer or external professionals specialized in mediations. These two options are linked to the fact that some school counselors haven't received enough training themselves related to mediation, or due to the fact that they don't have time enough to organize this training. Turning to specialized professionals can have benefits because of their experience in the field, but it can also cause the problem of not knowing the specific situation of every different school.

Finally, the third aspect is related to the implementation of Mediation Programs as just a technique for disciplinary behavior or as a conflict resolution skill that all of the students should acquire. On the other hand, and adding more complexity, it can be implemented as a way of understanding how we relate to others assuming it as the educational philosophy of the school's micro-context.

In Spain these programs have started being implemented very recently, compared with other countries. In 1993 the first Mediation Program was launched in the Basque Country, in 1996 in Catalonia, and in 1997 in Madrid. In this last city (Madrid) it started with an ambitious pilot program, training adults and peers from 10 schools the first academic year (1997-1998); and incorporating 29 more schools from 1998 to 2002. After this period of implementation the evaluation suggested that 71% of the participants said that the experience was positive; and those who defined it as negative identified the following problems (Torrego and Galán, 2008):

lack time, lack support from the principal, lack of teachers' stability, among others. This initiative doesn't continue as systematic as it was established at the beginning (training the teachers for one year, and following them during the implementation). The only offer nowadays is short training courses (4-10 hours), without follow up. There are only individual initiatives (as the one we will implement next year, funded by the Lafourcade-Ponce Institution for Positive Psychology), but not with governmental support.

2. Origins and influences of Peer Mediation Programs

The introduction of Peer Mediation Programs in educational settings has its roots in different origins and they are influenced by different disciplines (restorative justice in the juvenile system, peers learning model, peer-support interventions). This confluence of diverse approaches can help us understand why Peer Mediation Programs can be interpreted and applied differently, and that a whole approach perspective is needed.

In first place, any victim-offender process, such as the mediation interventions, has its origins in pre Western groups. Indigenous peoples and their community-based approaches to conflict resolution often called for the immediate and/or extended family and the local community to be involved in a discussion, 'circle' or 'conference' with the offender about the wrong done; not with a view to deciding on a punishment, but rather to seek an apology and the most appropriate method of reparation. Later this philosophy was followed by the Restorative Justice approach in the juvenile justice system. The first intervention using this philosophy was in 1974 in Ontario-Canada, and the theoretical frame was developed by Zehr in 1985 (Zehr, 2002, 2004).

Related to school settings, some authors claimed that the first school Peer Mediation Program in the USA was the San Francisco's Community Board Program in 1987, following the Community Mediation Programs conceived in the juvenile justice system (the *Neighborhood Justice Centers* in the 1980's). This program was very oriented to the conflict resolution approach, and how to negotiate a better solution for the parties involved in the conflict. But not all of the approximations of mediation in schools are as focused on conflict resolution. There are also approaches based on the Restorative Dialogues and Conferences. From this perspective the most important is to honor the relationship, more than achieving agreements. The students affected, their teachers, and also family and community members are invited to a "healing circle" to understand better what happened and to find solutions to restore relations.

Some authors acclaimed that the research-based Peer Mediation Programs began in the 1960s with the *Teaching Students to Be Peacemakers Program*, following the social interdependence theory (Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 2001, 2004). Finally, and very recently, some authors are working with Peer Mediation Programs from the perspective of the Peer Support Interventions (Cowie et al 2008a, 2008b), where mediation is another possibility to create positive relationships (such as tutors with their peers or offering their friendship to a lonely students, among other peer support interventions).

Taking into consideration all of these influences can help us understand their different contributions:

- The indigenous groups teach us that the wrong behavior not only hurts the victim but also the aggressor and the whole community. This should suggest the necessity of incorporating all the people affected in the search solutions.
- The restorative justice field teaches us that wrong behavior won't disappear simply because we punish the wrong-doers (retributive justice). It can be more educative to help persons assume their responsibility and learn how to restore the harm.
- The conflict resolution approach helps us understand that the conflict is a positive opportunity to grow (as individuals and communities), and that we need to learn how to manage it.
- The restorative conferences and dialogues highlight the importance of caring, and taking into consideration the psychological wellbeing of people, especially when affected by trauma.
- The peer learning shows us the importance of cooperation in the learning process, not only in relationship to interpersonal conflicts but also to intellectual conflicts.
- Finally, the peer support systems teach us the necessity of promoting support networks among students to develop positive friendships.

All these disciplines together give us the keys to a successful Peer Mediation Program:

implementation: through building community, giving opportunities for restoring harm, seeing conflicts as positive opportunities, creating caring environments and supporting trauma healing, fostering cooperation, and encouraging positive friendship relationships.

3. Socio Emotional benefits from these programs and unexplored possibilities

Different studies about these programs have demonstrated that mediation skills can be taught to students, and students can effectively apply their use in helping other students reach agreements (as shown in the meta-analytic –review of forty-three studies which meet the inclusion criteria of more than two hundred manuscripts- carried out by Burrell, Zirbel and Allen, 2003).

Among the benefits of the application of this programs, we can cite the development of important and necessary life skills, such as: active listening (Warne, 2003); negotiation skills (Johnson et al., 1995; Johnson and Johnson, 1996a and 1996b); problem solving skills (Johnson et al., 1995; Johnson and Johnson, 1996; Warne, 2003); reflection of feelings (Warne, 2003); constructive dialogue and management of the body language (McWilliam, 2010; Warne, 2003). Furthermore, these programs are a way to foster better school climates: they help students learn how to air their grievances in an appropriate way instead of an aggressive one (Casella, 2000; McWilliam, 2010); they empower students by giving them a “voice” in the resolution of their conflict and making them active participants in a process that will affect their relationships (McWilliam, 2010); and they decrease the number of out-of-school suspensions (Cantrell, Parks-Savage and Rehfuss, 2007).

But there is another benefit that hasn't been widely explored yet: the promotion of *Social Awareness*. Some authors have pointed out that this process helps students to validate different opinions (McWilliam, 2010); or it could be considered to be a way of teaching them to recognize warning signs of violence and manners to avoid dangerous relationships (Casella, 2000). But, apart from this isolated references, there are no studies or theories linking this two disciplines.

Social awareness is known as the ability to understand and negotiate inter-group relationships. This capacity to take others' perspectives in challenging situations is of central importance in the development of social competencies (Selman, 2003). Previous research spanned different disciplines, such as reading comprehension (Dray & Selman, 2011; Lobron & Selman, 2007), children's writing (Dray, Selman & Schultz, 2009) and understanding history (Barr, 2005; Barr et al., 1998; Facing History and Ourselves, 2010) and its relation with social awareness.

Meanwhile, as has been mentioned before, the possible link between social awareness and mediation programs has not been previously analyzed.

It can also be important to reflect on the possibilities to foster this development especially in students trained and working as mediators. In this case, we can also try to find connections with fostering their *informed social reflection*. This concept relates to the awareness of how social perspectives are taken into account through the integration of civic, historical, and ethical understanding. These three domains (civic orientation, ethical awareness, and historical understanding) are coordinated with an individual's perceptions and interpretations of the social context (Selman & Kwok, 2010). We hypothesize that *peer* mediation can be more than a vehicle for the resolution of interpersonal conflicts; it can also be a tool to promote social awareness in the students who participate, and to promote informed social reflection in those who participate as mediators. Peer mediation programs must prepare students to address conflicts that arise due to systemic and cultural violence associated with deep prejudices and injustices in our society, and this can only be done by talking seriously about issues of race, sexuality, poverty, gender, city politics, and school structure (Casella, 2000). Mediators must be prepared to talk about the possibilities of harassment, power, control, and bullying when conflicts occur among people of different social status in the school. They must understand that many youth are in such great need of respect that they will be violent if that is what it takes to obtain it. They must understand how the roots of school violence can be found in the organizations, social systems, school structures, and cultures that produce different rates of violent behavior, and not just in people's mismanaged behavior. Restorative practices provide opportunities to learn about the views and priorities of other people; for example, adapting a circle technique and inviting everyone in a class group to contribute an opinion can create a sense of community among students, and help stimulate an ability to take other people into account as equally valued members of the class group.

4. A more global approach: Restorative Practices and different terminology related to other related interventions for the relationship restitutions

After reviewing the disciplines that impact on Peer Mediation Programs and their benefits in the promotion of the socio-emotional development, the next necessary step is to include them in a broader, global approach. These programs cannot be considered as the unique solution or the only possibility. Peer Mediation Programs should be combined with other Restorative Practices, such as restorative dialogues and language or classroom circles as examples.

Knowing all these restorative practices teachers can choose which one better fits a specific situation. For example: student conflict may be a surface manifestation of deeper social or

emotional problems which require professional attention; or conflict situations which are inappropriate for peer mediation may put mediators and disputants at emotional and/or physical risk; and ethical issues may arise about the power balance and the limits of confidentiality, voluntarism and neutrality (McWilliam, 2010). Disputants benefit when their conflicts are simple enough to be resolved by a peer mediation process (Casella, 2000), but there are situations in which different interventions are needed.

A successful implementation requires a whole school approach in order for discipline to be delivered consistently across the school; with broad institutional support, resulting in 'a culture shift'; and with staff as a whole practicing restorative principles in their day-to-day management of student disputes (Kane et al., 2009). These researchers found in England that the pilot Restorative Justice in Schools Project (ran from 2001 to 2004) was very "patchy", with some staff very resistant to change, particularly the move away from punitive responses to challenging behavior (Kane et al., 2009). Furthermore, the largest independent evaluation of restorative justice in schools in the UK to date (commissioned by the Youth Justice Board of England and Wales, reported on a pilot initiative in which youth offending teams worked with 26 schools in England and Wales) found little impact on some outcome measures such as exclusion and no significant improvement in pupil attitudes except in a small number of schools where a whole school approach had been adopted (McCluskey et al., 2008b). Restorative practice, as it was developed in the pilot schools, ranged on a continuum from whole school to highly individualised approaches; each school developing its own aims and set of strategies. The continuum included (McCluskey et al., 2008b): Restorative ethos building; Curriculum focused on relationship/conflict prevention; Restorative language and scripts; Restorative enquiry; Restorative conversations; Mediation, shuttle mediation and peer mediation; Circles – checking-in and problem-solving circles; Restorative meetings, informal conferences, classroom conferences and mini-conferences; and Formal conferences.

The findings from the evaluation reveal ways in which some, though not all, of the schools involved in the Scottish evaluation were beginning to use the framework offered by the language and questions of restorative practices to reflect on much larger issues about school relationships, processes and priorities. One definition of restorative practices used in schools is as follows (McCluskey et al., 2008a):

- Where staff and pupils act towards each other in a helpful and non judgmental way;
- Where they work to understand the impact of their actions on others;

- Where there are fair processes that allow everyone to learn from any harm that may have been done;
- Where responses to difficult behaviors have positive outcomes for everyone.

Restorative Practice gives primacy to social relationships. Rather than support monologues of knowing, the aim of restorative practice is to create contexts for learning in which the voice of the other may be heard, and where dialogue and reflective enquiry prompt learning that is inclusive and socially informed (Macready, 2009).

Restorative Practices should include (Kane et al., 2008; McCluskey et al., 2008a):

- the importance of fair process;
- the recognition of the rights and involvement, where possible, of all parties in a dispute or conflict resolution;
- the notion of restoration or reparation instead of retribution;
- the importance of developing empathy for others in preventing and responding to conflict or violence;
- the valuing of the views of all parties in open discussion;
- the effectiveness of circles for exchanging views, expressing feelings or resolving issues; and
- the importance of the language (often scripted) used in addressing conflict and resolving disputes.

These three latter aspects again are closely related to the fostering of social awareness in adolescents, as mentioned before.

5. What do Restorative Practices have in common with other Socio Emotional Programs? What Barriers need to be overcome?

5.1.- The risk of teacher burn-out from too many complex interventions

Some school staff felt that they had embarked on too many initiatives at the same time and without making proper connections between them, with the result that school staff felt pulled in different directions simultaneously (Kane et al., 2009). These authors also pointed out that a crucial part of the school's readiness for change was not just recognition that things could be better, but their sense that they had the capacity to make them better. Staff morale was

therefore very important. Besides, when trying to implement interventions in schools our first objective should be how to empower teachers so that they feel confident enough to achieve the difficult changes we are demanding from them. Related to this barrier it is also important to help teachers by giving them the programs as specific as possible and divided into a step by step procedure. Planning processes allow to set realistic timescales for implementation with targets and milestones so that those involved can detect progress over the whole period needed for change to become embedded (Kane et al., 2009). The key features associated with successful implementation include readiness for change, balance of clarity, and flexibility about the identification of aims. These aspects are closely related to the theories of “stages of change” (pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance and relapse) as developed in other psychological areas such as clinical psychology or social psychology.

Finally, it is important to mention that there are signs that pupils can fulfil a leadership role in school development. The positioning of pupils as active subjects in the development, and not just passive recipients of its benefits, was a notable feature of successful implementation. Pupil participation contributed hugely to the creation of a ‘critical mass’ in some schools in support of the initiative, challenging the notion that the attitudes of all staff need to be addressed directly if change is to be pursued (Kane et al., 2009). As these authors propose school development is linked to the opportunities pupils, parents and staff have toward learning new things. Schools that fostered learning for all in the school community were more likely to bring about improvements. There was recognition that learning was achieved through collaboration itself. In schools which implemented Restorative Practices successfully, there were multiple opportunities for those involved to learn from each other.

5.2.- Teachers resistance and the necessity of professional development

“Teachers are afraid we are stealing their strength” as a Primary head teacher expressed (McCluskey et al., 2008a). The research suggests that Restorative Practices have the most impact when school staff are willing to reflect on their daily interactions in school and review their values (what kind of school they want and how they want to “be” with their pupils). Restorative Practices seem most effective when “behavior” is seen as an issue to be addressed through restorative strategies that involve active learning for all children and for staff across the school (McCluskey et al., 2008b): this is most likely to happen when there is a visible commitment, enthusiasm and modelling by the school management team and where the school has invested in significant staff development. Some head teachers and key stakeholders are

beginning to ask ‘what are we restoring to?’ ‘What is the nature of the relationships we have in this school?’ (McCluskey et al., 2008a). With these kinds of questions we can reflect on the whole school approach: are they focusing on how to stop the problem when it appears or are we focusing on how to create a school climate where these problems appear less frequently? To involve teachers in change, they really need to be highly motivated and convinced of the necessity of their effort.

This problem could be generalized to other socio-emotional programs that are trying to be implemented. Maybe we are trying to fit different interventions into a context which is not yet ready for them. Maybe the school teachers need a deeper reflection on the meaning of their role as educators before feeling ready and motivated to implement these programs. Or maybe they are ready to try these implementations but don't have enough support when the first problems (normal ones when trying something new and challenging) arrive.

Sometimes scepticism and resistance are common reactions that may hinder the effectiveness of school interventions (Ehrhardt, Barnett, Lentz, Stollar, & Reifin, 1996). In a more collaborative culture of mediation, students will be directly involved in making decisions about how conflicts are settled, and mediation will be actively modelled and used as a way to resolve differences at every level in the school. An effective mediation program requires both an ideological and an organizational shift in the balance of power, sharing control with students and parents, and redefining conflict as between people not people versus rules. This conflicting agenda contributed to the frustration and sense of dissonance experienced by many of the teacher trying to implement mediation interventions (Theberge & Karan, 2004).

In developing a restorative school culture, it will be important for participants in the school community to move from their known and familiar practice to what it is possible to know and do, in a process of scaffolded learning. This process will involve dialogue and a willingness to build on what is familiar and working well. Awareness raising and training opportunities will assist this process, initially involving the leadership team and subsequently all members of the school community (Kane et al., 2009). Furthermore, to generate the necessary confidence in these interventions, we need data to show teachers its effectiveness, benefits and offer them support to overcome difficult situations. In the case of Peer Mediation Programs, in response to the concerns of teachers and administrators (as well as parents) who might be reluctant for the

school to shift any power or authority to students, the literature delineates a variety of advantages compared with traditional means of dispute management and arbitration (Nix and Hale, 2007).

5.3.- The necessity of whole school approaches and not only specific programs

School counsellors and administrators contemplating, implementing, or managing Peer Mediation Programs (or any other kind of socio-emotional program) must understand that such interventions cannot be "layered onto" discipline as usual. Instead, the programs call for fundamentally different approaches to the distribution of power, disciplinary decision making, and person-to-person relationships within their institutions (Theberge and Karan, 2004). A supportive school environment seems to be the crucial element in what kinds of social, ethical, and civic conduct are seen and interpretations are heard (Selman & Kwok, 2010). The practices associated with the concept of restoration reflect the contention that socially responsible actions and responses are best learned in a relationship culture where individuals are respected and well integrated into a social network (Morrison, 2001,). Furthermore, it is very difficult to teach social justice in a non-social justice environment and to implement socio-emotional programs in contexts where it is not considered an important value for the school ethos.

There is a realization that a range of responses is necessary, but that these are most effective when underpinned by a common framework of values and language and also an acceptance that change takes time (Some head teachers in the pilot conducted in Scotland talked about the value of Restorative Practices saying that such major change may take 5–10 years to become embedded). The researchers from this project suggest that when conceptualized within a theoretical framework which draws on a humanistic and person-centred perspective, combined with a strong sociological understanding of the complexities of schooling, Restorative Practices may be compatible both with current priorities and practices in schools and, importantly, also offer a stronger, more cohesive structure for these current priorities and practices (McCluskey et al., 2008a). Although there is an expectation that schools will deliver a curriculum to promote social and emotional aspects of learning although there is still no place for this work in the league tables that are published to identify successful schools (Macready, 2009).

Advanced Research Group of the Real Colegio Complutense at Harvard University

Developing Socio-Emotional Education in the 21st Century: Theories and Strategies for Positive Intervention

Finally I want to introduce the next lectures for this summer work, hoping to stimulate the interest in our project and looking forward to counting on other people participation.

The Director of the Group Rosario Martínez Arias, Professor of Methodology of Behavioral Sciences at Complutense University (Madrid, Spain), will talk about “Influence of school, family and individual factors on school violence: a multilevel analysis”. We will also have the collaboration of Professor Robert Selman, Roy Edward Larsen Professor of Education and Human Development, and Professor of Psychology, Psychiatry Dept., Harvard Medical School (MA, USA), who will give a talk about “How to initiate School Community Change through teacher professional development in CSC and FHO programs”. Beatriz Lucas, Associate Professor of Developmental and Educational Psychology, La Rioja University (Logroño, Spain), will give a talk related to “Peer harassment and social relationships: an ecological perspective”; Rosa Rodríguez, Associate Professor of Social Sciences Department, Universidad Pablo de Olavide (Sevilla, Spain) will talk about “Researching the links between Intercultural education and socio-emotional learning”; and Irene Solbes, Assistant Professor of Developmental and Educational Psychology, Complutense University (Madrid, Spain) will analyzed “Attitudes toward human diversity in children: the specific case of anti-fat attitudes”. We will also have the collaboration of three doctoral students in the group: Jenny Jacobs, Harvard University Doctoral Candidate (MA, USA), whose research topic is related to “The construction of identities through classroom literacy events: Discourse analysis as a tool for teacher inquiry”; Michelle Bellino, Harvard University Doctoral Candidate (MA, USA), who will talk about “How do adolescents use past violence to shape their ethnic identities and civic engagement in the present?”; and finally Javier Martín, Complutense University Doctoral Candidate (Madrid, Spain) who is working on “Peer acceptance and social status related to bullying situations”. Finally we will like to thank the collaboration of some other people, who are not officially part of the group, although they will collaborate with us as possible. Lina Arias, Education Advisor, Spanish Ministry of Education, will give a lecture about “Thinking Emotions: improving emotional understanding and regulation of 5-year-old children based on the philosophy for children method”, Andres Molano, Harvard University Doctoral Candidate (Madrid, USA) will talk about his work in “Using social networks to identify peer effects”, and María Fernández, Complutense University Doctoral Candidate (Madrid, Spain) will share with us her work evaluating the relationship between social awareness and the different roles in bullying situations.

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Developing Socio-Emotional Education in the 21st Century: Theories and Strategies for Positive Intervention

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