

THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT: USING THE DYNAMIC MODEL TO DESIGN STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO FACE BULLYING

LEONIDAS KYRIAKIDES, ANTHI CHARALAMBOUS,
CHRYSTALA KALOYIROU & BERT CREEMERS



University
of Cyprus



INTRODUCTION: DEFINITION OF BULLYING

- # Although bullying is not just a contemporary phenomenon in education, only recently it has received substantial research and societal attention.
- # One reason for this delay may be its *multidimensional character*, which has raised a variety of constraints in its definition and measurement.
- # A student is being bullied or victimized when he/she is exposed, *repeatedly and over time*, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students.
- # There should also be an *imbalance in strength*: the student who is exposed to negative actions has difficulty in defending himself/herself.

INTRODUCTION: DEFINITION OF BULLYING

- # Bullying involves not only the individual students who act as bullies, victims or bystanders but is an issue that concerns **all the school stakeholders**.
- # Bullying affects the *quality of the school* and its *learning environment*.
 - Victims of aggressive behavior feel useless, experience depression, and this fact has a negative effect on their learning and on their academic achievement (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1994, Slee, 1994).
 - Bullying can increase teachers' stress (Byrne, 1992; Charlot & Emin, 1997; Nakou, 2000).

WHOLE SCHOOL ANTI-BULLYING INTERVENTIONS

- # Programs preventing school bullying should have **multiple components** that operate simultaneously at **different levels** in the school community.
- # Various research syntheses of the effectiveness of whole school approach have been conducted (e.g., Smith et al., 2004; Wilson et al., 2003).
 - **School-based programs** have additional effects on outcomes such as reduced truancy and school achievement (Wilson & Lipsey, 2007).
 - **Theoretically grounded interventions** which are able to disentangle the effectiveness of the different program components should be developed in order to increase the effects of comprehensive school based programs (Baldry & Farrington, 2007).

MAIN THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF THE PROJECT

- # This theoretical foundation can emerge through integrating research on bullying with Educational Effectiveness Research (EER) which refers to factors that operate at **different levels** and need to be considered in order to improve practice.
- # Programs promoting a positive and safe school learning environment are successful (Rigby et al, 2005).

MAIN THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF THE PROJECT

- # A framework based on research on bullying and on the **dynamic model of educational effectiveness** is offered to schools in order to help them identify what can be achieved and how, in order to deal with and prevent bullying.
 - A longitudinal study revealed that the dynamic model can be used to describe and explain why some teachers and schools are more effective in dealing with bullying (Kyriakides, Creemers & Charalambous, 2008).
 - The dynamic model gives emphasis to the role of the **school learning environment** in understanding effectiveness and also attempts to establish links between **EER** and **improvement of education**.

MAIN THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF THE PROJECT

- # Schools are helped to identify factors of the dynamic model which contribute to explaining and/or facing bullying.
- # Schools are encouraged to treat bullying as a challenge for introducing and achieving relevant **affective** and **cognitive aims** (i.e., social cognition, understanding of social values, emotional recognition, and positive attitudes towards peers) beyond those included in the formal curriculum.
- # **School Self-Evaluation (SSE)** is treated as a starting point for developing strategies and actions aiming to face bullying.

DYNAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON PROMOTING QUALITY IN EDUCATION

- # A major element of this approach is the emphasis on the **evidence** stemming from *theory and research*.
- # The knowledge-base of EER should be taken into account in developing **SSE mechanisms**.
- # The **dynamic model** of educational effectiveness is used as a framework for establishing SSE mechanisms.
- # This framework is expected to help schools collect data, through **school self-evaluation mechanisms**, and take decisions about **priorities for improvement** and for developing appropriate **policies and action plans**.

DYNAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON PROMOTING QUALITY IN EDUCATION

- # The **dynamic model** help schools establish school improvement strategies by:
 - Establishing clarity and consensus about the aims of school improvement
 - Collecting evaluation data and identifying priorities for improvement.
 - Establishing a developmental evaluation strategy

DYNAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON PROMOTING QUALITY IN EDUCATION

- # The dynamic model does not only refer to factors that are important for **explaining variation** in educational effectiveness but it also attempts to explain why these factors are important by **integrating different theoretical orientations to effectiveness**.
- # Teachers may become aware of both the **empirical support** for the factors involved in their project and the way these factors operate within a **conceptual framework**.
- # School stakeholders are offered the opportunity to use in a flexible way this knowledge-base, adapt it to their **specific needs**, and develop their own strategies for school improvement.

MAIN AIMS OF THE PROJECT

- # The project aims to help schools in the five participating countries use an *evidence-based and theory-driven approach* to face bullying among students of diverse socio-ethnic backgrounds.
- # The project aims to find out whether this approach of establishing strategies and actions at school level on bullying is effective.
- # We measure the impact of school based strategies on the improvement of the functioning of **school factors** included in the dynamic model and on **reduction of bullying**.

SCHOOL FACTORS OF THE DYNAMIC MODEL

The following **overarching factors at the school level** are included in the model:

- policy for creating the **SLE** and actions taken for improving the SLE
- school policy for **teaching** and actions taken for improving teaching practice
- **evaluation** of school policy and SLE

SCHOOL FACTORS OF THE DYNAMIC MODEL

- # Most bullying incidents occur *outside the classroom* and thereby schools should have a clear policy for the following aspects of the SLE:
 1. **student behaviour outside the classroom** (e.g., facing bullying incidents during school breaks)
 2. **collaboration and interaction between teachers**
 3. **partnership policy** (e.g., cooperation with parents in sharing information and taking actions to face bullying)
 4. **provision of sufficient learning resources** (e.g., organisation of school based INSET programmes for facing bullying)
 5. **values in favour of learning**, (e.g., understanding of social values, emotional recognition, development of positive attitudes towards peers).

SCHOOL FACTORS OF THE DYNAMIC MODEL

- # **School policy on teaching** may encourage teachers introduce new teaching aims that are associated with bullying.
 - Bullying is not an isolated phenomenon independent of teaching.
 - Reducing bullying can be achieved by **providing learning opportunities** to bullies, victims and bystanders to develop their socio-cognitive skills and their attitudes towards peers and schooling.

SCHOOL FACTORS OF THE DYNAMIC MODEL

- # School policy on the **quality of teaching** should be developed further in order to help teachers develop a safe and caring classroom learning environment.
 - This aspect of school policy provides suggestions to teachers on how to deal with classroom misbehaviour and with bullying incidents that may occur during teaching.
- # **School evaluation** mechanisms help school stakeholders to find out who are involved in bullying incidents and which aspects of the SLE and the policy on teaching need to be improved.
- # School evaluation mechanisms are expected to help school stakeholders to redefine and improve the school policy on facing bullying.

SCHOOL FACTORS OF THE DYNAMIC MODEL

- # The above procedure stresses the importance of a share responsibility of the **whole school community** in developing and implementing strategies and actions to face bullying.
- # The **role of teachers** and their active involvement is crucial for the success of this intervention.
- # The successful implementation of this project depends on the **active involvement of teachers** and their contribution in designing their action plans by bringing their knowledge and experiences in dealing with bullying.

**Thank you for
your attention!**

