

Indicators of Evaluation of Policies to Prevent School Violence: a Case Study in Brazil

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to present a research about the elaboration of indicators to evaluate the impact of a governmental proposal of prevention to the school violence, that is being implemented by the Secretary of Education of the state of Minas Gerais in Brazil and the Public Defender's Office, program MESC - Mediation of Conflicts in School Environment and other governmental Programs.

The concept of social indicators and especially of educational indicators has gained significant space in recent decades in Brazil. Originally linked to the idea of state planning, it gains new formats and reaches different areas and methodologies for its construction, ranging from quantitative methodologies to qualitative methodologies. According to Januzzi (2001) social indicators lend themselves to subsidize the activities of public planning and formulation of social policies allowing a deepening of academic research on social change.

Research methodology: a) analysis of the documents of the documentary proposal of the MESC program; b) the holding of focus groups with educators and school managers in the state of Minas Gerais, seeking to map the actions that were concretely implemented and to construct with them the evaluation indicators of the proposal.

The data analysis methodology used was the critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 2010; Fairclough, 2012). The critical analysis of discourse is a discursive analytic investigation that seeks to understand, to reveal and how domination and inequality are represented and reproduced by oral and written texts in each social and political context (Van Dijk, 2010).

As conclusion, is highlighted the importance of the construction of indicators with the participation of those involved and of indicators that can lead the schools to a self-analysis so that all the processes of institutional and interpersonal interaction can be contemplated. The text of the abstract should be maximum of 350 words and written in italicized text, using Arial 10-point. The paragraph should be fully justified. Please leave two blank lines after the abstract, then begin the main text.

Key words: School Violence; Educational Indicators; Educational Policy; Conflict Mediation at School.

1. The construction of educational indicators: some insights

The concept of social indicators and especially of educational indicators has gained significant space in recent decades in Brazil. Originally linked to the idea of state planning, it gains new formats and reaches different areas and methodologies for its construction, ranging from quantitative methodologies to qualitative methodologies. According to Januzzi [1] social indicators lend themselves to subsidize the activities of public planning and formulation of social policies allowing a deepening of academic research on social change.

With regard to educational indicators Bauer and Souza [2] point out that there is not a strong tradition to assess educational programs, neither a formal approach, along with the devaluation of their results to review/reformulate proposals and actions that are the purpose of such evaluation.

Minayo [3], when discussing the issue of educational indicators as a concept, emphasizes that:

The definition of the term "indicator" within a scientific standpoint varies little from one author to another. In general, researchers consider that these indicators are quantitative or qualitative parameters that are used to detail whether the objectives of a certain proposal are being well addressed (process assessment) or if they have been achieved (result assessment). As a kind of signs of reality, most indicators focus on the purpose of a measurement and an assessment of processes of construction of reality or development of evaluative investigations. (p.84)

The author also emphasizes that selecting indicators for evaluation purpose should be made according to the aspects that we want to highlight in an attempt to track efficiency, efficacy, effectiveness or the impact from a specific organizational policy. For this purpose, she defines some concepts that are related to the construction of indicators, such the ones about efficiency, which refer

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to the good use of financial, material and human resources with regard to the activities and achieved results; efficacy, which is related to the relation between the actions that are performed and the results that are achieved; effectiveness, which is defined as being the observation of the incorporation of changes that are generated by a specific program within the reality of the target population and the impact that corresponds to the power of influence and irradiation of a project that is carried out.

With regard to qualitative indicators, which is the approach we are going to use, the author emphasizes that we will not find lists of qualitative indicators, because unlike measurement scales, these indicators are constructed using the own actors that are part of the evaluative study. She also highlights some more used techniques for the construction of qualitative indicators, which are: focus groups; Delphi; nominal groups and narrative technique.

Another important aspect that the author emphasizes, and that was considered in the research, refers to the participatory way in which qualitative indicators are elaborated:

Qualitative indicators, therefore, must be constructed in a participative way and considered to be evaluative benchmarks, which enable us to more deeply map the nature of the changes that have taken place and are in process. To strengthen this principle, Demo highlights that the participation of subjects is essential for the construction of indicators, because the political participation in our everyday life is the core element of the human dimension of quality, our capacity to self-managing, our creativity that draws future endeavors, the self-determination and self-promotion of subjects. (p.87)

With this purpose, a methodology for the development of indicators of school violence within a qualitative perspective should have, as its driving principle, the participation of those involved in the school daily life so that the different visions about this daily life can manifest themselves. As a result, the research that has been undertaken is part of this principle to achieve its goals.

2. The experience in Minas Gerais and the development of evaluation indicators for the implemented policies

At the time we started our research, there was a change in the government political party in the state of Minas Gerais, so we were asked to do a work involving the development of indicators of school violence without using the policies that had been previously developed. Anyway, our analysis adds insights to the proposals that have been implemented so far, as they will most certainly impact the educational indicators that schools put in place.

The state of Minas Gerais, located in the Southeast region of Brazil, has developed governmental proposals with the support of institutions that are connected to justice, and non-governmental organizations, in line with the education for Peace, and since 2011 it has created the "Inter-sectoral Group for Addressing the Conditions Generating Violence in Schools in the State Public Network"[3]. This group proposes to discuss the different manifestations of school violence within its physical space and around it. In Minas Gerais the following projects have been proposed, which are projects with actions that are based on the school or actions that are focused on the violence of young people in general:

a) Living School Active Community. This project is designed to strengthen the schools located in areas with social vulnerability indexes, which are subject to significant levels of violence, according to the summary report of the Inter-Sectoral Group. Today, there are 440 thousand students from 501 schools located in 103 municipalities in different regions of the state.

b) Forpaz- Forum for the Promotion of Peace. FORPAZ is a joint initiative carried out by the state of Minas Gerais Education Department- SEE- and the state Public Defense Office of the state of Minas Gerais in partnership with the representative committee of the Technical School Security Forum for the development a culture of peace by the Legislative Assembly of the state of Minas Gerais. FORPAZ action areas are: conflict mediation: sensitization, training and implementation of the MESC Project - Mediation of Conflicts in the School Environment (coordinated by the Public Defense Office of Belo Horizonte); implementation of Restorative Justice programs in schools of the state network; exchange and replication of successful programs in the state network; school community mobilization campaigns; training of teachers in subject-matters that are related to the promotion of school peace.

c) MESC - Program for Mediation of Conflicts in the School Environment (Mesc), carried out in a partnership with the State Department of Education. It was created in 2011 and is developed by Human, Collective and Socio-environmental Rights (DPDH). With the slogan "Peace in Action", its purpose is to prevent violence and conflicts in the school environment. Mesc methodology includes providing the instruments and tools for the school to build its own mediation process. One of the key elements of the project is to work on for the mediation of conflicts with the students themselves so that they can become violence inhibiting agents against bullying and encourage a culture of peace inside the school walls. These young people will be responsible for developing mediation actions to prevent,



minimize and mitigate conflicts between students and other school players using the concepts of restorative justice and conflict negotiation.

These programs have positive aspects, as they have developed actions along with the school communities such as: engaging the community for a joint action to fight school violence, sharing good experiences and training in conflict mediation by the school community. However, the presence of public defense officials should be pointed out, as it gives a judicial characteristic to the actions that are developed. When questioning this situation, a member of the Education Department pointed out that by participating in these activities, the defense office highlights that it is up to the schools to address these conflicts in the school environment and it is not up to the justice department, as this should be done only in cases that are considered to be a crime. Despite this aspect, the concern with the school violence and youth vulnerability is a subject that has mobilized school institutions and the Education Department.

Firstly, a discussion was held involving the whole school to discuss the concept of indicators and the methodology for the development of such indicators within a perspective of self-evaluation by the school, under the approach of principles of coexistence where the different players involved can be able to negotiate conflicts, discuss divergences and find the best way to address them.

The starting point for developing these indicators of school violence were the experiences of the two schools under study, with focus groups including teachers, managers and students, with an average of 12 participants separated by different categories. Teachers and managers formed a category and students another category. In addition to adding insights to the actions that are and the ways to assess these actions, as well as the new school violence prevention programs that will eventually be put in place, the following topics were discussed by members of the focus group: a) what is violence and what items of violence the school experiences; b) what aspects consider that the prevention program has addressed, and what practical actions that have been implemented they would like to highlight; c) what results have been seen in terms of improving the coexistence in the school and what other approaches and proposals need to be implemented.

After the discussion on the themes discussed by the focus groups, we attempted to summarize the main indications of violence, the conflict negotiation models used and the suggested models, and how to assess the actions that would be put in motion from the points that are considered important to be addressed in a proposal designed to prevent violence in schools. The data analysis methodology used was the critical discourse analysis as stated Van Dijk [5]. The critical analysis of discourse is a discursive analytic investigation that seeks to understand, to reveal and how domination and inequality are represented and reproduced by oral and written texts in each social and political context.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, we would like to highlight that the construction of indicators of school violence with the engagement of those involved in the school daily life, and from a self-evaluation approach of the school as an institution and of the people as participants in this process, has allowed us to highlight different points to be taken into account when developing such indicators, such as: a) the conception of violence and school violence; b) ways of addressing violence and how this action should be present in the indicators for assessment of school coexistence.

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