United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

# TACKLING VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS:
# THE ROLE OF UNESCO/BRAZIL



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## I. PRESENTATION

In today's world the boundaries between the local and the global are becoming less and less precise. This phenomenon is especially true in regions and countries where there are increasing socio-economic inequalities as well as increasingly numerous acts of violence. These acts of violence have been progressively spreading and occupying spaces that had previously been protected. This is why there are numerous governments that recognize violence as an existing fact, as a part of our daily lives. This fact is powerfully woven into the fabric of social relationships.

Conscious of the gravity of this situation, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO has taken on the challenge of contributing to reversing this situation and encouraging the development of a Culture of Peace. This effort is being made through the consolidation of democratic values and the intransigent defense of human rights. This challenge also includes defending fairer life conditions for all.

Over the past few decades, Brazil has served as an example of this phenomenon of profound inequalities and social exclusion. Numerous studies have identified this situation in Brazil, where violent acts are demonstrated in alarming numbers. Brazilian youths, particularly those from 15 to 24 years-old, are the portion of the population most exposed to violence, whether as victims, or agents. In terms of deaths that are caused by what are called external factors (homicides, traffic accidents and suicides), the quantitative data corresponding to the youth age groups are so high that they place Brazilian indices as the third highest in the world.

Brazilian schools are not immune to this violence. School is still seen as one of the few concrete vehicles for change or social mobility for a large part of the population. The idea that school is a place for protection and also a place that needs to be protected by society no longer corresponds to the reality of most school establishments. This is why schools are often transformed into dangerous places that harbor robberies, homicides, sexual abuse, threats and property damage as well as other more brutal forms of violence. These situations occur within the schools as well as in the areas that surround them. We watch daily as our schools become true prisons in terms of appearance and physical structure. They are enclosed by steel grades and some are conspicuously monitored by video cameras or public and/or private police.

The evidence shows that year after year there is a progressive process of youths being the primary victims of violence in Brazil. There is also the fact that the schools have become vulnerable places marked by an atmosphere of constant tension. Faced with this evidence, since 1997, UNESCO Brazil has been performing a series of actions that focus on understanding and proposing viable ways out of these situations. In order to accomplish this, priority action has been taken in two principal areas. This article concentrates on some of the results.

- The first, through the production of a variety of studies and research on national and regional levels, UNESCO has been carried out with a proposal to deeply explore and become familiar with some of the principle aspects of the phenomenon of violence and its occurrence among youths and in Brazilian schools. In this sense, special emphasis will be given to the most recent UNESCO projects. One of the highlights of these projects is "Mapa da Violência III: os Jovens do Brasil" (Map of Violence III: the Youths of Brazil). Another is the study "Violências nas Escolas" (Violences in Schools). These studies and their results are signs of UNESCO's concern for the issue.

- The second is a search to offer concrete proposals that have been tested and proved to be efficient on all political fronts. The goal of this search is to confront the consequences of violence where a young person is the victim or primary agent. This search involves violence that occurs in one of the spaces that is most

evident in the youth's daily life. That space is the school environment. These proposals are represented here in an explanation of the primary guiding principles of the "Making Room" Program and the effects the program has had in Brazilian states (Abramovay et al., 2001; Waiselfisz & Maciel, 2003).

UNESCO hopes to contribute to the broad debate surrounding one of the most pressing issues facing us today. This issue is the incidence of the numerous types of violence in Brazilian schools, as well as in most of Latin-American countries. In order to approach this issue, the methodology chosen was to become familiar with experiences and actions that are especially proposed, planned and carried out with a focus on improving relationships within the school universe. An effort was also made to provide a broader view of these experiences and to provide them with a certain visibility. The final goal of these cumulative efforts is to improve the Brazilian educational system.

## II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The issue of school violence has been included in the national and international scenario as one of the huge challenges facing the establishment of a Culture of Peace. Great difficulty surrounds this issue in terms of creating concepts and finding explanations for the origins and causes of the violent acts that are practiced in the school setting.

In order to understand this type of difficulty, attention should be paid to the fact that the term violence has a multiplicity of meanings. The term incorporates a variety of meanings that are historically and culturally defined (Debarbieux, 1996, 1998; Chesnais, 1981; Dupâquier, 1999). The term is also covered by an all-purpose definition that includes a huge variety of diverse situations, from petty crimes and attacks against property to life-threatening situations. These are the realities and manifestations of these distinct and different violences.

In spite of the complexity of the term and the difficulty of the conceptualization that surrounds it, there is one basic consensus. That is that every act of aggression – physical, moral or institutional – against the integrity of individual(s) or group(s) is considered as an act of violence (Abramovay & Rua, 2002).

Based on this consensus, the literature that most specifically involves the issue of school violence has been outlined along the years through different points of view and focuses of interests. Charlot emphasized (*apud* Abramovay and Rua, 2002), that the definition of school violence is *a heterogeneous phenomenon* that *breaks down the structure of basic representations of social value: the one from childhood (innocence), and the one from school (a peaceful refuge), and from society itself (a pacific element in a democratic regime).* Still according to Charlot (*idem, ibidem*), the violences practiced in the school universe must be placed in a hierarchy in order to be understood and explained. This hierarchy is based on the nature of the acts. There are acts associated with what is called *violence* (theft, sexual violence, personal injury, crime, etc.), and there are acts of *incivility* (humiliation, bad words and lack of respect). There are also acts of *institutional* and *symbolic violence* (violence in power relationships).

To a certain extent, the hierarchy proposed by this author allows for the phenomena of school violence to be understood in the broadest and most diverse way possible. Violence is understood to be actions that result from a break in dialogue (intimidation, injury, and petty crime against objects and property, etc.). Violence is also understood to be violences (in plural) that are practiced by what Bourdieu (2001) calls "concealed power", or symbolic violence.

The idea of *incivility* as a guideline for analyzing school violence has huge repercussions, especially in studies from France (Peralva, 1997). Among these studies, some authors, like Dupâquier (1999) and Fukui (1992), call attention to the necessity of recognizing violence as *aggression* (demonstrations of incivility). It must be kept in mind, however, that every act of aggression is not necessarily a demonstration of violence and that not every act of aggression is based on a desire to *destroy someone else/the other.*

For Debarbieux (1998), *incivilities are anti-social and anti-school violences. The more traumatic they are and the more they are silenced and transformed into banal events in order to protect the school, the more they become, many times, a form of symbolic violence.* (Abramovay & Rua, 2002). Recent studies (Debarbieux, 2002; Blaya, 2002)

warn us about the possibility the term has of generating a distorted view of school interactions. This can cause interpretations and explanations of violent acts that have an evolutionist slant. This includes a predominant use of standard terms for behavior that are considered to be "savage" or "civilized". The use of these terms suggests substituting the term *incivilities* for the term *micro-violences*. This would allow for a better qualification of certain acts of violence that occur in the interactive processes that take place among the different participants.

The necessity of establishing limits between concepts like violence and aggression has become an important issue. Beginning in the nineties, studies have been showing great promise/results in the search not only to understand the phenomenon of violence in a broader fashion, but also to understand daily school life in an intelligible way. This search includes looking at the school in its entirety, in the context of numerous forms of positive and negative interactions. In this sense, it is important to stay alert to the differences in the school realities and take into consideration the codes and rules that are defined by each society.

Different surveys performed, for example, in Europe, Canada and Brazil (Debarbieux, 2002; Blaya, 2002; Ortega, 2002; Royer, 2002; Abramovay & Rua, 2002; Abramovay et al., 2000 etc.), have demonstrated that there are a wide variety of points of view on the school universe. This contributes in a significant way to an intelligible understanding of the phenomenon of violence.

Studies performed in England (Hayden, 2001; Blaya, 2001) point out the difficulty in shaping a concept of school violence in that the term violence is not usually linked to qualifying specific acts that are practiced by teachers against students or vice versa. This is true because this type of violence involves emotional connotations (Abramovay & Rua, 2002). Using terms like "aggression", "aggressive behavior", "bullying" and "disruption" would be more appropriate when dealing with some day to day situations in the schools. In Spain, as Ortega demonstrates (2001), there is a type of moral discomfort attached to qualifying certain acts of violence as "school violence". This is especially true for acts practiced against youth and children. In the United States, emphasis tends to be placed outside of the schools with a focus on gangs (Hagedorn,

1997). In these cases, the terms that are used are "juvenile delinquency", "misconduct" and "anti-social behavior" (Flannery, 1997).

In Brazil, beginning in the mid-90s, a tendency towards a certain consensus in the literature may be observed in terms of treating violences as any demonstration of aggression against property or persons (students, teachers, schools, school employees, etc.) (Fukui, 1992; Sposito, 1994; Guimarães, 1996; Candau, Lucinda & Nascimento; Minayo, 1999).

From the point of view of looking for explications for the causes of school violence, the literature associates acts of violence with external and/or internal factors.

To sum things up, it can be said that external factors (exogenous) refer to explanations of a socio-economic nature. These include aggravation of social, racial and gender exclusion as well as a lack of points of reference among the youths themselves. Other external factors include an increase in groups and gangs in addition to drug trafficking and a breakdown in family structure. The lack or loss of space for socializing is included in addition to other factors (Candau, Lucinda & Nascimento, 1999; Guimarães, 1998; Belintane, 1998; Artz, 1998; Peignard, 1998; Payet, 1997; Zinnecker, 1998). While these are not conditioning factors, they are found in explanations of many cases of violence practiced in the schools. From this point of view, the school is seen as the victim of situations that are out of its control. The school becomes an object of violent acts.

In terms of internal variables (endogenous), the literature emphasizes factors that include rules and regulations systems as well as political-pedagogical projects (Hayden & Blaya, 2001; Ramogino *et al.*, 1997). These factors also include a breakdown in agreements on internal coexistence in addition to lack of respect on the part of the teachers for students and vice versa. Other factors cited are the poor teaching quality and lack of resources (Sposito, 1998; Feldman, 1998; Blaya, 2001). These variables are part of a set of actions, difficulties and tensions that are experienced in the daily school routine. Reasons for difficulties in establishing relationships between the students, the school and the community seem to be explicitly found in these variables.

In conclusion, it is important to point out that the issue of "violence in the schools" incorporates a variety of points of view, perceptions and analysis models. As Debarbieux (2001) and Watts (1998) point out, it is important to proceed with multidisciplinary and transnational studies as a way of confronting distinctly different experiences. These studies allow for the discovery of common factors that allow for a broader understanding of the phenomenon. There is consensus, in the meantime, that the idea of school and the schools themselves are undergoing transformations in terms of identity, role and social function.

Using studies that focus on the school universe to align macro-social points of view on youth, violence, school and social exclusion can make an important contribution in the construction of alternatives for confronting violence. In this respect, UNESCO has taken decisive steps in this direction.

## III. VIOLENCE AND SCHOOLS IN BRAZIL

Numeric dimensions must be taken into consideration when focusing on Brazilian youth. According to data published by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, based on the Demographic Census of 2000, there are 170 million residents in Brazil. A significant part of this population – 34 million – is made up of youths between 15 and 24 years of age. This represents 20% of the total population, an age group where most of society's expectations should lie in terms of production and reproduction. However, this is the age group where the highest indices of death by violence are found.

Statistics from the Brazilian Health Ministry's Mortality Information System reflect that in the year 2000, 70.3% of deaths of Brazilian youths were caused by external causes (traffic accidents, homicides and suicides). From this figure, 38.1% of these deaths was due to homicide. In São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Pernambuco this percentage increased to over 50%. It is worth mentioning that firearms were used in 68.3% of the homicides registered for youths. According to Waiselfisz (2002), these indices are so severe that, together with drops in fertility rates that have been recently observed, they

are directly responsible for the trend in the decrease in the total number of youths in Brazil that will take place over the next few years.

The costs of violence in Brazil are enormous. Calculations from the International Development Bank – IDB evaluate that if public and private institution costs are totaled the Brazilian total in August of 2001 reached US$ 30 billion[1]. This figure represents around 10.5% of the Gross Domestic Product for Brazil. Nations like Peru, the United States and France consume 5.1%, 3% and 2% of their GDP, respectively (Helena & Werneck, 2001). To make a comparison, the expenditure for Brazil is more than the entire economic production of a country like Chile, for example (idem, ibidem).

In terms of the Brazilian educational system there is general agreement that education is of vital importance in confronting the enormous social inequalities found in the country. Education, above all in the public system, is still unsatisfactory both in terms of reach and quality. Education still remains lacking in terms of the population's needs[2].

In terms of youth educational levels, although the illiteracy rate fell from 15.5% to 11.7% between 1994[3] and 2000, the numbers are still highly unsatisfactory. This is particularly true when the total number of youths that attend school is considered. This total is 46.8% (16 million) of the youth population (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, Census 2000). This percentage, if analyzed in another fashion, alerts us to the fact that over half of Brazilian youths is not part of the educational system[4].

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[1] Using the official exchange selling price for US$ from April 29, 2003.

[2] However, over the past two decades, educational policies have demonstrated more openness to change. This has occurred because of pressure from different sectors of society. Changes were reflected in the 1988 Constitution and incorporated trends of a global nature. These are present, for example, in the Law of Educational Bases and Guidelines of 1996 and in the curricular reforms of the nineties. In this context, issues like decentralization in political-administrative processes and democratization of the public schools stand out as highlights. The creation of collegiate organizations and councils that were given deliberative and decision-making authority has contributed to schools that are more autonomous. The involvement of the school community in the selection of principals has had the same effect, in addition to the community's involvement in the direct distribution of financial resources to the schools. The actions of governmental powers – especially on the federal level through the Ministry of Education – have played a special role, above all in terms of educational measures.

[3] Estimated data from the Ministry of Education/Brazilian Institute for Educational Research and Studies, based on the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistices-PNAD, 1994.

[4] This number takes on even more alarming dimensions when compared with statistics that attest to almost total coverage in the educational system of the population between 7 and 14 years of age (97% in

The previous described scenario contains one of the most serious problems that the educational system in any contemporary country faces. This is the aggravation of situations that generate "violence in the schools". This is the huge challenge that must be faced by political policies in order to prepare and shape youth within the school setting.

Considering all the data we have just presented, UNESCO got immediatedly concerned about the alarming conditions in which the Brazilian youth was inserted. The issue of youth and violence was of immediate concern, specially if we take into account that this was the group most vitimised by violence. In the light of the above, the UNESCO Brasilia Office has started a series of studies, in many of the Brazilian capitals, in order to assess and map out the current scenario faced by the Brazilian youth.

Studies and research that UNESCO and UNESCO partners have been performing have made important contributions in terms of offering broad, meaningful diagnostics on youth as well as on different types of violence and the effects this violence has on schools. (Castro *et al.*, 2001; Abramovay *et al.,* 2000).

These several publications have pointed that Brazilian youngsters are the most vitimised group of the increasing violence in the country. The UNESCO series of studies "Map of Violence" (I, II and III) have brought to the Brazilian society the alarming scenario where our children live in. As far as measuring youth violence is concerned, the publications have shown that youth suicide rates remained unaltered in the 90s and traffic accidents felt dramatically due to the enforcement of a new Traffic Code. However, homicide rates grew significantly, specially in the large Brazilian urban centers.

The UNESCO studies have also indicated the importance of protecting the school surrounding environment. In fact, as the book "Violence in School" points out, the surrounding spaces of schools are also a source of risk, in the sense that they are often

general, according to the School Census 2002 performed by National Institute for Educational Research/Ministry of Education), demonstrating that in educational policies that are aimed at the 15 to 24 year old age group in Brazil, there is still a long way to go.

marked by establishments such as bars, restaurants, etc. All protection is needed to ensure a safe environment for our youth, shall it be inside or outside the school perimeter.

More importantly, however, is that the UNESCO publications have given a voice to the youth to express their own definition of what violence entails. What we have found is that violence is not a single concept through the youth perspective. On contrary, students have identified multiple meanings, coming from physical to discrimination and social exclusion. These several perceptions of violence have obvious implications in the school performance in the sense that many students have reported to feel desistimulated or prefer to be absent.

In this regard, the UNESCO publications identified a number of demands and conclusions that could be taken from the actual scenario. The first is that all the youngsters surveyed manifested a deep desire for social integration, the need to be part of a group. The second, and most crucial observation, is that the Brazilian youth have some common demands that reflect the lack of access to sport, cultural and social opportunities, what in turn can bring these youngsters into a perpetuous and vicious circle of social exclusion.

One of the most complete studies performed on the subject in America is found in this context. This is the survey "Violence in the Schools" (Abramovay & Rua, 2002). Developed in 14 Brazilian capitals[5], "Violence in the Schools" was based on the perceptions of the students, parents, teachers, principals and employees of public and private schools. The study was able to construct a map of the numerous types of violence that are registered in school units.

In order to become more familiar with the school universe and the points of view of the various participants[6], the survey chose to use a wide-reaching concept of violence. This

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[5] The study was performed during the year 2000, in Brazilian public and private schools in the following Federal Units: AL (Maceió), AM (Manaus), BA (Salvador), CE (Fortaleza), DF (Brasília), ES (Vitória), GO (Goiânia), MT (Cuiabá), PA (Belém), PE (Recife), RJ (Rio de Janeiro), RS (Porto Alegre), SC (Florianópolis) and SP (São Paulo).

[6] Questionnaires were given to students (33,655), to parents (10,225) and to groups of technical-pedagogical staff members (3,099). The questionnaires were distributed in 239 public schools and 101

incorporated the idea of ill treatment and the use of force or intimidation. It incorporated socio-cultural and symbolic aspects of the phenomenon as well[7].

The study points to some situations that may trigger violence. These include disciplinary acts, aggressive acts between students and teachers, graffiti, damage to the school and inexplicit rules for organization. These factors also include a lack of human or material resources as well as low salaries for teachers and employees. They also include a lack of dialogue between the people that make up the school. Other factors include a lack of interaction between the family and the community. The study suggests that these situations should be thought of in an integrated fashion. They should be seen as factors that are not necessarily interrelated in terms of causality, but that are deeply interdependent.

The study confirms previous data from Waiselfisz (2000), that call attention to the fact that students are generally the primary victims of violences, according to teachers, school employees and principals.

The fact that the school setting becomes a place that is inappropriate for giving class is confirmed as the most significant impact of violence. This situation aggravates student absences and the quality of the classes deteriorates, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Students, by capitals of Federal Unit, according to perception of effects of violence in school on school performance, 2000 (%):**

|  | RS | GO | CE | PA | SP | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Can't concentrate on studies | 42 | 46 | 49 | 46 | 42 | 45 |
| Feel nervous, fed up | 33 | 34 | 32 | 28 | 32 | 32 |
| Lose interest in going to school | 32 | 34 | 34 | 28 | 33 | 31 |
| Total | 170,512 | 198,832 | 357,002 | 192,841 | 1,462,380 | 4,633,301 |

private schools. In addition to this, principals, discipline coordinators, supervisors, security guards and police officers were interviewed by qualitative specialists. Focus groups were formed with students, parents and teachers. A total of 2,155 people were interviewed, with 729 hours of recorded interviews.

[7] Blaya, (2002) in research on the school environment and violence in the secondary education systems in France and England, observes that verbal offenses were the most frequent demonstration of violence in these countries, confirming that the biggest problem in schools is not "rough" violence. It is agitation and "repeated micro-violences" (Debarbieux *et al.*, 1999; Gil and Hearnshaw,1997).

Source: National Survey on Violence, AIDS and Drugs in Schools, UNESCO, 2001.

These types of occurrences have drastic consequences on students. They have to repeat grades or are even excluded from school. Repeated grades or dropouts compromise the efficiency of the school system[8].

Violence significantly affects the school environment. Deterioration in relationships impinges on the quality of classes and student school performance (Abramovay & Rua, 2002). Table 2 illustrates this.

**Table 2. Students, by capitals of Federal Unit, according to perception of impact of violence on educational quality, 2000 (%):**

|  | RS | MT | PE | SC | RJ | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School atmosphere gets heavy | 44 | 42 | 35 | 48 | 37 | 39 |
| Quality of classes gets worse | 30 | 30 | 27 | 29 | 28 | 31 |
| TOTAL | 170,511 | 83,871 | 246,179 | 50,046 | 665,907 | 4,633,301 |

Source: National Survey on Violence, AIDS and Drugs in Schools, 2001.

In addition to influencing educational quality and school performance the "violent atmosphere" influences the professional performance of the technical-pedagogical staff. It also impinges on the students' perceptions of the physical school space. It also affects the students' impressions of school administration as well as their impressions of their own classmates. A hostile school environment contributes to damage in relationships between the people that make up the school (teachers and students; teachers and the administration; students and students, and students and the administration)[9]. Table 3 provides a panoramic view of the things that students like least about school.

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[8] According to the Brazilian Institute for Educational Research/2001, students in basic education require 10.2 years to complete the first 8 years of studies included in the survey. In secondary school, the students took an average of 3.8 years to complete 3 years of study.

[9] Ortega (2002) points out the importance of preventing violence through improving conditions for coexistence. This process implies mobilizing numerous motivations. The education of emotions, feelings and values can not be considered as simply a part of the process. It is necessary to incorporate objectives, content and strategies into the curriculum that allow students to express their emotions. These strategies need to allow students to become familiar with their own feelings and to assume attitudes and values of mutual respect (p. 209).

**Table 3. Students, by capitals of Federal Units, according to what they don't like at school, 2000 (%):**

|  | RS | SC | DF | PE | RJ | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Physical space | 45 | 41 | 48 | 45 | 49 | 44 |
| Administrative and Principal's Offices | 29 | 38 | 36 | 40 | 28 | 34 |
| Most of the students | 30 | 33 | 32 | 33 | 28 | 33 |
| Classes | 31 | 34 | 29 | 26 | 23 | 25 |
| Most of the teachers | 25 | 29 | 25 | 22 | 20 | 24 |

Source: National Survey on Violence, AIDS and Drugs in Schools, 2001.

Based on this information, the study emphasizes the importance of paying close attention to the areas that surround the school and the internal school environment. This includes paying attention to interaction between the school, the family and the community. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of establishing mechanisms for negotiating rules and norms within the school as well as creating processes that make teachers more sensitive to the different ways that violence is expressed. Other factors include the establishment of affirmative actions in terms of public security and valorizing and organizing the youths. Emphasis is also placed on linking different governmental areas (education, justice, culture, etc.) and on developing written and audio-visual didactic material (Abramovay & Rua, 2002, 335-342).

Giving priority to these results, UNESCO Brazil has been aiming to help through a series of recommendations related to the establishment of political policies that will contribute to reversing this violence. More importantly, however, these studies served to raise some of the most pressing needs identified by the Brazilian youngsters: such as better education, jobs, better health services, leisure and alternative spaces for social interaction.

In regard to all the claims made by the Brazilian youth, the latter reivindication (namely "alternative spaces") immediatedly called UNESCO's attention as this was precisely one of the points where UNESCO could promptly react in order to improve the living conditions of the 32 million youngsters in the country. In this regard, at the end of the 90s, UNESCO has begun a concatenated strategy to provide culture and social spaces for low-income communities. One could think that the most cost-effective solution

would be to make use of the already existing facilities provided by schools which, however, were not yet publicly available during the weekends.
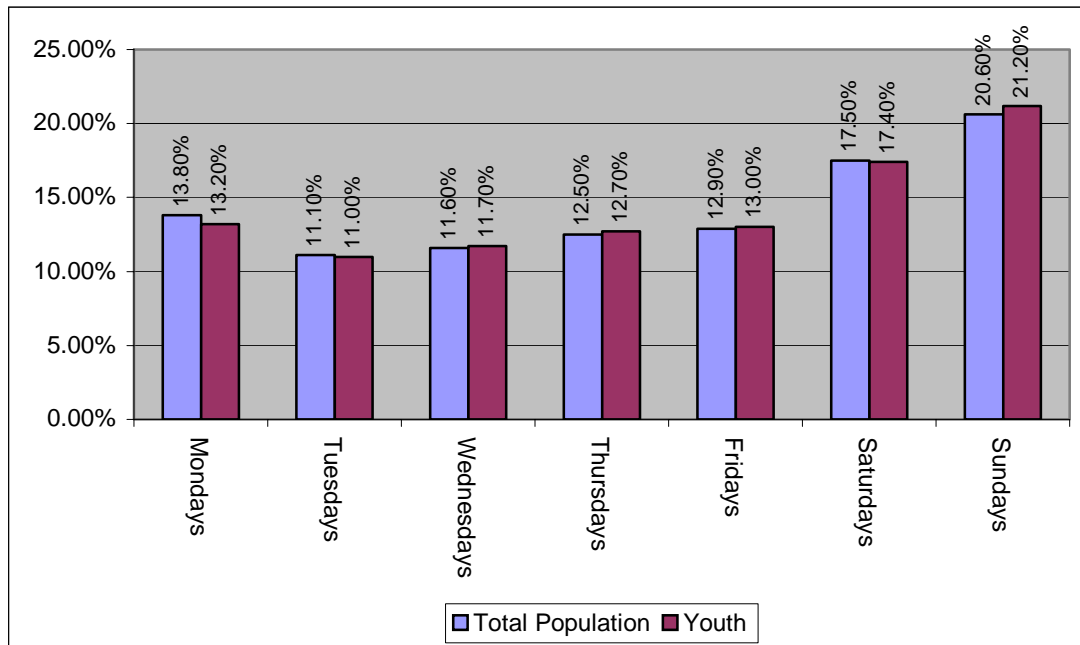
In that sense, UNESCO/Brazil took the important decision of engaging more proactively with and within the school environment. UNESCO has then approached the states where the rates of youth violence where particularly high, such as Rio de Janeiro, Bahia and Pernambuco. Through the partnership with these state governments, UNESCO would then create the Program "Making Room", a national strategy to provide sociability oportunities and alternative spaces for leisure, art and cultural activities.

## IV. A STRATEGY THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE – THE "MAKING ROOM PROGRAM"

The Making Room Program was conceived in 2000 in the sphere of a global policy for the development of a Culture of Peace and for the consolidation of democratic values in a way that would combat inequalities among nations. The program was conceived as a way of fighting against the high indices of violence and the persistence of different forms of discrimination (Noleto, 2001). The Making Room Program is an alternative for youths to use their free time and have contact with leisure. The objective of the program is to contribute to reducing the high levels of violence that are registered on the weekends. For youths, these levels are higher during the weekends than they are during the weekdays, according to Waiselfisz (2000)[10], as shown in table 4.

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[10] According to the author's research, there has been a disproportionate increase in homicide rates among youths on Saturdays and Sundays. This rate is 57% higher than the number for weekdays.

**Table 4. Percentage of deaths along the week in brazil**



Source: "Map of Violence III", UNESCO, 2002

The conception of the Program is to redeem the importance of education. The idea is to give education value, principally in terms of conceptual support offered by Delors and Morin. For Delors (1998), education must be organized on four basic pillars: *learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together* and *learning how to be.* With a view towards the recently begun century, Morin (2000) defends the construction of education that is founded in "seven knowledges": *the blindness of knowledge (error and illusion), the principles of important knowledge, the human condition, earthly identity, confronting uncertainties, understanding* and *ethics for the human race.*

In Making Room, school is recognized as a potentially favorable *locus* for investment in a process of changes in attitudes and behavior of the youths that are actively or passively exposed to violence (Abramovay *et al.*, 2001). Beginning with the assumption that the school institution is representative and retains respectability in conjunction with the youths and the communities. This makes it possible to treat the school as a reference point and a place of belonging. The social position that school occupies as a legitimate organized space must be kept in mind. It is a location which all members of a community have access to, whether they are formally linked to the school or not. School has the potential of being the most informal linking contact between

youths, families and communities.

However, it is not only the school space that makes the Program worthwhile. The Program is effective in part because of it is founded in actions of a cultural, artistic and sports nature. The Program depends on the collective participation of the institution. This includes principals, teachers, cafeteria employees and auxiliary staff members. Their activities are incorporated into educational practices and other on-going initiatives. Other on-going activities are incorporated into the program and their equipment and supplies are utilized by the Making Room Program. The Program counts on human, technical and physical resources from the school and from the local communities. This provides for a consistent educational project and focus is placed on the "Youth", the "School" and the "Community" (Noleto, 2001, p. 18) allowing for contribution to the strengthening of the youths' citizenship, participation and protagonism.

In the states where it has already been longer established (Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco and Bahia, among others)[11], the Making Room Program has taken on specific characteristics according to the local reality. This has taken place through partnerships with Secretariats of Education and other institutions and organizations from civil society.

In general, the Program functions through opening schools on the weekends (Saturdays and/or Sundays). This is precisely when there is an increase in the incidence of violent acts practiced against or by youths. The Program preferably operates in learning establishments that have adequate physical space available. This includes computer labs, sports courts, libraries, etc. The schools are located in areas with high incidences of violence and few alternatives for leisure and culture. The Program takes place through workshops and a variety of activities that are selected based on consultation with the local youths. Most of the time, the workshops are administrated by hired monitors and volunteers that are preferably youths and members of the community.

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[11] The Program has different names in different locales: "Schools of Peace", in Rio de Janeiro; "Open School", in Pernambuco; Making Room, in Bahia.

Activities are developed in the areas of culture, sports, arts and leisure and include other areas that interest the youths, like computer sciences.

One of the most important aspects of Making Room has to do with its process-oriented nature. This becomes explicit in the fact that the youths make adjustments in their daily lives that include guidelines for practicing tolerance and mutual respect.

The strategies that make the Program so valuable have been highly effective as evaluations performed since the beginning have shown. It cannot be denied that although Making Room is a recent phenomenon, it has already made significant victories. The weekends of many Brazilians have certainly taken on new, promising possibilities. The initiative counts on the approval of the majority of involved participants and has had extremely positive results in reducing intra and extra-school violence.

Some of these victories only demonstrate the importance of the Program. These include possibilities for broadening the cultural universe of the youths and the professors as well as bringing schools and families closer together. Other outcomes are the recognition of the school space as a place that cares for youths and prevents them from being exposed to situations of violence. Other positive results are possibilities for developing new alternatives for coexistence among youths from different groups both within the school and outside the school. There is also greater closeness and solidarity among the youths, the teachers and the communities that allow for opportunities and spaces for meetings, dialogue and affection. The importance of the Program has been stressed by important newspapers and specialised newsletters such as *Le Monde Education*, *La Nación*, *Reuters*, *ANSA*, and *EFE*.

In addition to a positive feedback from the media, civil society and the government, the "Making Room" Program was also evaluated by UNESCO in three diferent stages. The first process evaluation was done by UNESCO in the State of Rio de Janeiro for the "Schools of Peace" Program (the name given to the "Making Room" Program in the state). In this respect, the findings of this important study were compiled into the book

"Schools of Peace", in which UNESCO/Brazil has, once again, demonstrated the feasibility of the "Making Room" Program.

The results of evaluations performed during the year 2000, in the first phase of the Program in the State of Rio de Janeiro (Abramovay *et al.*, 2001)[12], highlighted the positive feelings that were awakened in the participants as well as the potential that the school demonstrated in terms of being a place for sociability.

When pointing out the reasons that made them participate in the activities, 66.9% of the youths surveyed stated that they wanted to meet with their friends and 49.3% said that they wanted to get to know people, according to table 5 below.

**Table 5. Reasons for participating in the Schools of Peace Program, according to the youths:**

| Reasons for Participating | % |
|---|---|
| To meet friends | 66.9 |
| Like the activities | 54.8 |
| Like the school | 52.1 |
| To get to know people | 49.3 |
| To spend free time | 45.2 |
| Like the team members | 40.6 |
| The time is convenient | 40.4 |
| The school is nearby | 31.3 |
| Like the people that go there | 29.6 |
| The school is easy to get to | 28.8 |
| My parents encourage me to go | 27.7 |
| To get off the street | 26.4 |
| I don't have anything else to do | 23.1 |

[12] During the first phase of the Program in Rio de Janeiro, there was an evaluation process with the purpose of providing support for eventual re-orientation and expansion. This incorporated two complementary approaches. One was the quantitative approach that was based on surveys performed through questionnaires that were answered by students, principals and groups of motivators in the participating schools. The other approach was qualitative and was based on the development of focus groups in six selected schools with youths that participated in the Program as well as with youths that did not participate in the Program in addition to Program development teams. In the quantitative approach, the surveys sought to reach the entire universe of participating schools (111 in the entire country). Questionnaires that the students could fill out themselves were applied to the students (11,560 total) and to the principals (89 total) and members of the Program motivator groups (931 total). During the qualitative study around 220 were heard from in 24 interviews and in 19 focus groups. There were 34 visits to selected schools in metropolitan Rio de Janeiro, the result of 34 visits to selected schools in the municipalities of Rio de Janeiro, Niterói, São Gonçalo and São João do Meriti.

| | |
|---|---|
| Because of the meal | 9.6 |

Source: Schools of Peace Evaluation, UNESCO, 2000.

These indices reinforce the idea of the school as a legitimate place for establishing social relationships. This points to an aspect that, in spite of the existing data, the Program can make even stronger.

Positive feelings are present in the statements of both youths and motivators[13] in the previously mentioned evaluation in relation to the impact the activities have on reducing violence, as shown in table 6:

**Table 6. Youths and motivators evaluation of Program impact (%):**

| Program Impact | Motivators | Students |
|---|---|---|
| Helps diminish violence in school | 82.0 | 69.5 |
| Helps diminish violence in other locations | 72.3 | 43.2 |
| Helps diminish violence in your neighborhood | 66.7 | 43.0 |
| Helps diminish violence in your family | 53.9 | 36.3 |
| Doesn't help diminish violence | 5.3 | 13.9 |

Source: Schools of Peace Evaluation, UNESCO, 2000.

In the same fashion, the Program is recognized for its strength in other categories of social demands and necessities. This can be seen in the motivators' opinions of their results.

In terms of the participation of the youths – students or not – and other participants from the different communities involved in the developed actions, the evaluation revealed that the presence of the program was extremely significant and that it was an important part of strengthening the process of the schools becoming more united with their surroundings. Some significant examples include one graffiti-spraying adolescent that had already had numerous run-ins with the police. After participating in the Program he returned to school and became a "graffiti artist" and his work gained a lot of attention.

> *I used to spray paint everything, all the important city monuments. In my*
> *head it was like this: the more important it was, the better! I loved getting*

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[13] Responsible for first-phase development of Program activities in Rio de Janeiro.

> *together with the gang and messing up. I don't think like that anymore. I found out about graffiti art here in the Program and I want to make a living this way.* (Student, Schools of Peace Evaluation, UNESCO, 2000).

Another more recently performed study on the impact of Making Room in the States of Pernambuco and Rio de Janeiro (Waiselfisz & Maciel, 2003)[14], confirms the positive balance Making Room has for the school establishment in reducing violence that reaches the school internally and externally.

A more recent evaluation on the impact of Making Room was done in the states of Pernambuco and Rio de Janeiro, "Reversing Violence: Seeding the Future" (*Revertendo Violências: Semeando Futuros*), in which the impressions of school headteachers were collected, confirms the positive balance Making Room has for the school establishment in reducing violence that reaches the school internally and externally.

The following table was developed based on the perception of the principals of participating and non-participating schools. The table illustrates that the schools that participated in Making Room in both states normally demonstrated improvement in the 18 listed aspects. Some items presented much more noticeable beneficial results and this confirmed the previous study (Abramovay et al., 2001). The enormous potential of the Program is clearly shown in the State of Rio de Janeiro. For Rio de Janeiro and Pernambuco, some of the main indices of improvement illustrated in this table include the following areas: fights in school; student misbehavior; community involvement with school; relationships among students; vandalism/damage to school and personal offenses/humiliations.

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[14] The study was comprised of an objective evaluation of Program impact on the reduction of violence for inside the school as well as for the area surrounding the school. This evaluation was performed in the two states where the pioneer Program was established. An evaluation model was used that was able to offer quick answers and to present a solid methodology in terms of mapping out the incidence of the wide variety of demonstrations of violences. This model was developed in each of the two states through two groups – program participants and non-participants (control group). This included 102 schools that participated in the Schools for Peace Program with an equal number of non-participants in Rio de Janeiro. In Pernambuco, there were 120 participating schools and an equal number of non-participants. Both intra- and extra-school situations that induced violence were studied. School administrative staff opinions and perceptions on how these demonstrations either improved or became more aggravated were part of the study. This was accomplished through Program results for the years 2000, 2001 and 2002.

**Table 7. Scale of improvement[15]– Participant and non-participant schools in the Making Room Program in Rio de Janeiro and Pernambuco, according to the principals:**

| ASPECT | Rio de Janeiro | | Pernambuco | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Program | Non Program | Program | Non Program |
| Fights in school | 58.7 | 27.2 | 55.7 | 36.4 |
| Robbery | 19.2 | 18.4 | 25.4 | 19.0 |
| Petty theft | 32.7 | 13.6 | 36.1 | 23.3 |
| Vandalism/damage to the school | 45.2 | 30.1 | 45.9 | 23.3 |
| Graffiti | 51.9 | 26.2 | 43.1 | 20.0 |
| Sexual aggression | 3.8 | 1.9 | 20.0 | 20.2 |
| Drug trafficking | 11.5 | 5.8 | 17.4 | 15.8 |
| Drug use or consumption | 9.6 | 3.9 | 23.5 | 15.0 |
| Personal offenses/humiliations | 26.0 | 4.9 | 38.0 | 19.0 |
| Carrying firearms | 1.9 | 1.0 | 14.0 | 9.7 |
| Gangs in school | 8.7 | 1.0 | 22.5 | 19.3 |
| Student Misbehavior | 64.4 | 15.5 | 54.1 | 25.4 |
| Use of alcohol in school | 4.8 | 1.9 | 24.6 | 17.2 |
| Community involvement with school | 82.7 | 49.5 | 84.4 | 60.0 |
| Parental participation | 78.6 | 54.4 | 73.8 | 64.5 |
| Relationship between teachers and students | 63.1 | 37.9 | 62.8 | 48.8 |
| Relationship among students | 77.7 | 28.2 | 66.1 | 37.5 |
| Student learning | 61.5 | 37.9 | 53.3 | 38.3 |

Source: Evaluation of Impact of Making Room Program, UNESCO, 2003

Another significant item is improvements obtained by the participating schools after they became part of the Program. Table 8 illustrates that the principals felt that the earlier their school became part of the Making Room Program, the greater the benefits to the learning establishment. In Rio de Janeiro for example, 15 of the 18 listed items have a higher degree of improvement in the schools that joined the Program in 2000 in

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[15] This scale corresponds to comparisons performed by principals on the previous and current situations in the surveyed schools. The "better" answers were given 100 positive points. The "equal" answers were given 0 points and the "worse" answers were given 100 negative points. For example, if all of the principals said that the situation had improved, the value would be 100 positive points. If they all said

comparison to those that joined in 2001. In Pernambuco, all of the 18 items listed demonstrated significantly higher averages in schools that had participated in the Program since 2000, in comparison to those that joined the Program after that time.

**Table 8. Scale of improvement – Schools that participated in the Making Room Program in Rio de Janeiro and Pernambuco, according to beginning year, according to principals:**

| ASPECT | Rio de Janeiro: joined in | | Pernambuco: joined in | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2000 | 2001 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
| Fights in School | 66.7 | 55.8 | 83.3 | 59.2 | 27.8 |
| Robbery | 29.6 | 15.6 | 66.7 | 24.5 | 16.7 |
| Petty Theft | 48.1 | 27.3 | 83.3 | 33.7 | 33.3 |
| Vandalism/damage to the school | 59.3 | 40.3 | 100.0 | 43.9 | 38.9 |
| Graffiti | 59.3 | 49.4 | 83.3 | 30.2 | 22.2 |
| Sexual Aggression | 3.7 | 3.9 | 33.3 | 14.3 | 11.8 |
| Drug Trafficking | 18.5 | 9.1 | 33.3 | 16.3 | 17.6 |
| Drug Use or Consumption | 7.4 | 10.4 | 66.7 | 21.6 | 18.8 |
| Personal Offenses/Humiliation | 33.3 | 23.4 | 100.0 | 34.7 | 35.3 |
| Carrying firearms | 3.7 | 1.3 | 33.3 | 12.2 | 17.6 |
| Gangs in school | 14.8 | 6.5 | 33.3 | 22.4 | 18.8 |
| Student Misbehavior | 74.1 | 61.0 | 83.3 | 55.1 | 38.9 |
| Use of alcohol in school | 7.4 | 3.9 | 50.0 | 23.5 | 22.2 |
| Community interest for school | 81.5 | 83.1 | 100.0 | 84.7 | 77.8 |
| Parental participation | 80.8 | 77.9 | 83.3 | 74.5 | 66.7 |
| Relationship between teachers and students | 76.9 | 58.4 | 100.0 | 61.2 | 58.8 |
| Relationship among students | 80.8 | 76.6 | 100.0 | 63.3 | 70.6 |
| Student learning | 77.8 | 55.8 | 66.7 | 52.6 | 52.9 |

Source: Evaluation of the Making Room Program, UNESCO, 2003

Other conclusions in the study deserve special attention. There were substantial improvements in the internal environments in the schools, also from Mondays to

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that the situation had gotten worse, then the value would be 100 negative points. If the situation was "equal", then the scale value would be zero.

Fridays, because of the reduction of some of the indices of violence. This was especially true for violence related to relationships among students and to the relationships that students had with their teachers. This improvement is confirmed in the collected data and had a direct effect on improvement in the students' learning. The improvement demonstrated in these two indicators finds resonance in the ideas of Abramovay & Rua (2002), when they state that violence is one of the principal factors that account for the poor school performance verified in Brazilian schools today.

The research demonstrates highly significant improvement in the relationship the school has with the students' parents or guardians and the people that live in the surrounding community. Students' parents and members of the community participate directly in the activities offered by schools on the weekends. These individuals take advantage of the school space, a place that had frequently been of limited access before. These links establish the possibility to *reverse a set of aggressions and violences that the schools had been suffering. Many of these aggressions and violences had originated outside of the school yet they had a strong effect on coexistence within the schools.* (Waiselfisz & Maciel, 2003, p. 103). Clear indicators are not yet available, due to the short time this experience has been in place, yet it can be inferred that there is a slight tendency of reversal in the heaviest and most criminal forms of violence (such as drug use and consumption and carrying firearms, etc.) in the schools that participate in the Program.

At the end of this study, based on the analysis of total annual expenses for the Program in the States of Pernambuco and Rio de Janeiro with the public served on the weekends, the authors estimated the average cost of each participant at US$ 0,30 per month in Pernambuco and US$ 0,70 in Rio de Janeiro[16]. This highlights the fact that, according to international standards[17], these are very low values in terms of preventive programs. These values are extremely low when compared with the resources applied to repressive

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[16] In the State of Rio de Janeiro, the Program is more expensive. In addition to the fact that some of the workshops are paid for, a meal is also offered to the participants. This meal includes a very positive opportunity of fraternization among the participants.

[17] Around US$ 0.28 in Pernambuco and US$ 0.56 in Rio de Janeiro, using the official exchange selling price of R$ 3.50 for US$ from the first twenty days of March, 2003. It is worth mentioning that even though the Making Room Program has not yet been evaluated for this study in the State of Bahia, the monthly cost per participant in that state was evaluated at around R$ 1.00, or US$ 0.28.

or punitive activities (jailing adolescent offenders or imprisoning young criminals), which costs per month US$ 1,500.00.

More recently, UNESCO has comissioned a detailed impact evaluation of the "Making Room" Program in the state of Bahia. A state with impressive dimensions, not to mention severe social inequalities. The state of Bahia is one of the largest Brazilian states, with over 400 municipalities. The capital, Salvador, is the third largest Brazilian city (with over 3 million people in its metropolitan perimeter). From this population, 557 thousands people are between 15 and 24 years-old.

According to the preliminary data of our study, from the 58 schools where the programme is currently implemented, it was found that 43 are based in low-income communities, marked by strong social problems. In all these communities the project proved to be an efficient programme to minimizing social exclusion and reducing rates of violence.

The program has also proven to be successful in targetting the youth population – the final beneficiaries of the program are those between 11 and 20 years of age, what responds for 88,7% of the participants in the program. Those youngsters have espontaneously reported to have considerably improved their relationship with their communities, not to mention their social skills.

The evaluation being undertaken in Bahia seems also to demonstrate the positive impact of the programme as far as the youth motivation is concerned. It should be said that the program in Bahia relies on intense colaboration of youth volunteers, what has proven to increase their citizenship and gives them ownership over the project, through which they reinforce their relationship with the school. Indeed, our recent evaluation has shown that 91,8% of the facilitators are volunteers. More importantly, the program has proven to reestablish a positive image on the school environment, as demonstrated by many personal testimonies.

These positive feelings generated about the school environment have direct implications in the behaviour of the participating youngsters. It has been reported that the school

facilities are more conserved and vandalism incidents are now rare. In the same fashion, students are more friendly with the pedagogical staff, what permits them to better interact and contribute with the school teachers.

The positive outcomes are also reflected in its indirect beneficiaries, such as the neighbouring communities and parents. Parents have said that they feel more safe with the implementation of the program whereas their kids are well-protected in the school.

Other aspect related to the project is the integration of individuals who are not necessarily enrolled in the school, but share the same neighborhood. This can facilitate their return to school, not to mention the possibility of facilitating the interaction with their community peers who are already participating in the program.

In other words, our recent evaluation has demonstrated that the school has become a more accessible space, thus generating  benefits not only to the students, but also to all those who can benefit from their facilities. Indeed, it has been often reported cases of parents who brought their children to the program and then later have enrolled themselves in the activities that "Making Room" is able to offer.

## V. FINAL OBSERVATIONS

In conclusion, it must be mentioned that the studies and research on "violences in the schools" that UNESCO in Brazil has been developing have allowed for the circulation of a large amount of information.  These studies have made an enormous contribution in the debate surrounding the issue.  They have also contributed to the development of wide reaching partnerships with governmental and non-governmental institutions, universities and civil society in general.

These initiatives have formed large support networks of cooperation and solidarity among different areas of society.  The goal of the initiatives is to find peaceful, creative solutions to reverse the violence that mainly affects youths.

In this process, the initiative of the Making Room Program answered a series of demands from the schools, the youths and the communities. Program activities indicated viable directions for the development of political policies for youths. The Program has been successfully developed in a number of Brazilian schools and this is evident in the results of the evaluations and surveys. Many times, these experiences are put into motion by the many educators, youths and communities that need to respond to an extremely adverse and tense environment. This was also observed in the study "Innovative Schools: successful experiences in public schools".

What characterizes these practices in general is the fact that they are not centered on the use of security measures. They are based on quality relationships that are guided by educational concepts and pedagogical projects that are aimed at making everyone involved responsible for what happens in the daily life of the school. The importance of constant dialogue makes teachers and students feel that they are participating more. They become involved in the school dynamic and this makes them more committed to the school and consequently, more responsible.

A tendency for the schools to become more open in terms of incorporating meaningful learning was observed. This process evolved based on the relationship networks and included the use of different times and educational spaces. It also included relationships that were based on a more horizontal line among the students and the teaching staff.

Another positive aspect observed in these schools is the concern for creating a network of relationships with a variety of institutions and social movements. This has contributed to the incorporation of new issues in the schools that include gender, race, environment and special education. This has been a decisive factor in overcoming the physical and social isolation of the school. It also creates feelings of protection, valorization and recognition towards the individuals that make up the school community.

The trajectories of these schools have been varied and multiple. This is important as it shows that their development has incorporated specific characteristics of each school related to the history and individuals that participate in the social-spatial context they

are part of. The specificities of the networks they are linked to are taken into consideration, allowing for the establishment of new social relationships and new knowledge producing formats. These are not necessarily processed into rigid, conventional grades.

There is no doubt that violence today is one of the main reasons for low quality education. This is true in Brazil and in a number of countries in different parts of the world. When seen from this point of view, we are all victims. Our daily life somehow includes schools that have been transformed by circumstances that in the extreme have turned schools into battlefields. Every member of Brazilian society has contact with the schools when passing through communities that surround the schools. Today's visible growing victimization of youths is extinguishing our society's hope.

More importantly, however, is the fact that there is a direct relationship between violence and low education performance. It has been widely reported in the specialized literature (Scheerens & Bosker, 1997) that the school is less effective when teachers and other technical staff make use of symbolic violence, but also physical violence, against pupils and colleagues, what in turn can generate a vicious circle and a culture of failure and school drop-out. The several "violences" (in plural to denote the several typologies of that phenomenon), whilst affecting the order, motivation, satisfaction and expectation of the actors in regard to one another, have highly plausible impacts in schools and have implications over the failure of their purposes and broader objectives of education, learning and apprenticeship.

Although is clear the need for in depth studies on the impact of violence over quality education, the evidence available seems to point out a direct and negative relationship between "violences" (in plural) and school performance, including its success measured by the continuity of studies and the student frequency to class. Schools – which relationships are damaged by the high proportion of students who reject their peers – are often those which, presumably, have their performance harmed (Abramovay & Rua, 2002). This correlation is not limited to the school environment, but also have repercussions in other factors, such as the use of school time, whereas the more frequent

is the violence, more efforts are devoted to tackle it and less time teachers have to concentrate in learning activities.

This is why it is absolutely essential to become attentive to the fact that experiences that are developed locally have the capacity of turning into global actions. They provide strength to the promotion of new forms of global change and transformation. These experiences demonstrate distinct knowledge, trajectories and innovative practices that generate an accumulation of more efficient tools in the constitution of a Culture of Peace.

The first pages of this article confirm that becoming familiar with cultural practices and local, regional, national and international differences opens up possibilities for creating alternatives that combat the many forms of violence that are part of our daily lives.

Through the exchange of different activities and strategies developed locally for social levels that are as different as the cultures they are part of makes it possible to generate global knowledge that serves to decrease social inequality and that promotes greater social integration. Although there is huge diversity among different countries, the challenge is to find a way to confront the heterogeneous realities that exist and to construct affinities that are capable of involving the government and different social segments, turning them into partners and making them co-responsible in searching for alternatives to the culture of violence.

Faced with this picture, UNESCO in Brazil feels a strong commitment to proposing new actions for confronting the violences imposed on the daily school routine. This commitment involves contributing to the present of these youths in order that they may be effective subjects in the construction of their future.

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