

WHAT ARE OUR STUDENTS COMPLAINING ABOUT? IS IT REALLY SCHOOL?

*Maria Luisa Pujante Beltrán
**Andrés Cervera García
***María Jesús Martín Martínez
****Concha Monzo Infant

TIMONEDA, WHO ARE WE?

TIMONEDA is an association of professional educators. Most members have been working and training since the implementation of the measures known as RESPECTING DIVERSITY. CURRICULAR DIVERSIFICATION programs are one example. From that moment on, we have realized that our training as subject specialists is not enough to help us deal with all of the problems that we encounter in the classroom, which is really just a reflection of the society in which we live. This situation encouraged us to get in touch with experts from other fields, and this has allowed us to approach our work from a different perspective. The EDUCATION IN AND FOR CONFLICT PROGRAMS have changed our negative view of conflict. We now see conflict as an educational tool that we can use to learn, evolve and grow as persons. SYSTEMS THEORY has helped us understand the violent behavior of some of our students as a symptom of deeper problems. From a systemic point of view on communication, it is impossible NOT TO COMMUNICATE. We are always communicating something. By the same token, it is also impossible not to learn. We also know that IF NO RELATIONSHIP EXISTS, LEARNING DOES NOT TAKE PLACE, and therefore, to the extent we are able to improve our relationship with our students, the better their ability to learn will be, or at least their attitude towards learning. These theoretical models and others such as TEAM WORK or LEARNING STYLES have given us a common language with which to analyze our problems from a different perspective and incorporate practices that will improve our performance.

THE TEACHING CONTEXT: IDEAS AND PROPOSALS FOR A WORKSHOP

Over the last few decades, significant changes have taken place in our social and economic system. One of them has been the change of roles within a married couple, which is directly tied to the new reality of the labor market. There have also been important changes in cultural values and models. These changes have made us think about how this new family reality affects educational and social needs.

It is no wonder that these new and unresolved situations often lead to parents feeling guilty about not having enough time for their children (a crisis in the nuclear family model?). As a result, new compensatory models based on overprotecting children and forgiving any type of behavior, including undesirable or socially deviant ones, are

* Secondary school teacher, Member of the Timoneda Association of Alicante

** Family therapist, Member of the Timoneda Association of Alicante

*** Secondary school teacher, Member of the Timoneda Association of Alicante

**** Secondary school teacher, Member of the Timoneda Association of Alicante

cropping up. We are seeing that this new model translates into the creation of alliances within the nuclear family which are meant to try to help overcome external difficulties that endanger the social success of the family members. The result, however, is that the nucleus becomes more closed; the family closes ranks. There is a jumble of mixed emotions and sensations, just when what is really needed is a strong sense of support and dependability so that family members can work together to clarify and decide on what should be done without anyone feeling as if the "ball has been thrown back into their court" or that their efforts in the family are being questioned. There should be no sense that someone is going to win and someone to lose because defenses might be put up to counteract the judgments being made about their performance as parents in comparison to their responsibilities.

At the beginning of a new school year, who is the most afraid? Is it the professor who doesn't know what to expect? Is it the student who has to study things that don't interest him? Is it the parent who has no idea what will happen?

We are a diverse group of educators with a common goal: to transmit our knowledge to the students who pass through our classrooms year after year. Most of us had great expectations and dreams when we began. We thought we were going to be the "Teacher of the Year." Slowly but surely we came to realize that it is enough to simply be the "teacher of the day" and move our students along little by little without ever stopping. This implies change, learning new things, recognizing our own errors, and staying up to date ...

Things have changed, and when we come before a group of students in a classroom we don't know what is going to happen during the year. We don't know if we are going to be able to work or if they are going to let us work. We don't know if we have conflictive or violent students in class, or if or or There are so many variables that we virtually face each new day as if it were an obstacle course.

The problems that arise in school are a reflection of those that adolescents have face in this new stage of life, which often times neither parents or teachers really recognize or understand. If a student has problems at home, in school or with his friend, who is going to help him? Who really knows if he even has a problem? When his academic performance bottoms out and he only creates problems in class, who knows why? What can we as teachers do?

Nowadays, a teacher's role is not only to teach but also to achieve good group dynamics and a positive atmosphere in which learning can take place. We have to earn the respect of our students and of their families. Only in this way can we work together to obtain positive results on a daily basis.

School failure is a symptom, not an illness. When a student has problems in school, we usually think our subject doesn't interest him, and sometimes this is the case. However, in other cases, misbehaving is simply a means for the student to express his rejection of a complicated situation at home or with his friends.

The million-dollar question is: What things can we fix? and how can we fix them? In the first place, we must count on the help of the families and work together with them to benefit the student. However, it is also very important for teachers to know what resources are available outside of the educational sphere and whom to contact.

When faced with a violent situation, what should we do?

When faced with hostility, what should we do?

When faced with disruptive behavior, how should we react?

The educational system detects and uses its limited resources to respond to students' cries for help which are often manifested as "worrisome" behaviors. The use of these resources will show us if we are starting down a dead-end road which will only use all of our energy without producing effective change, or if we are responding out of habit even if we are not sure that the response will work. This is when we need to be self-critical and ask ourselves if we should try something more co-participatory, recognizing that we do not have the miracle solutions that everyone is asking us for and that we have looked for in families, co-workers, and institutions.

Teachers need more resources in order to successfully deal with new social realities. They need specialized training, help from professionals from other fields, and more than anything, the possibility of sharing the responsibility for teaching these students with their families.

Education is everyone's responsibility.

PROBLEMS AT SCHOOL?

In this workshop, we want to work on some specific cases such as "The student who felt abandoned." This is the case of a young girl, Sara, who is repeating 9th grade. She lives in a shelter, has a very strong personality, and makes every effort to systematically anger her teachers. What's up with Sara? Why is she making such a fuss? How can we help her?

The second case study is called "The student who didn't want to be stupid." Pablo is a quiet boy who does not call attention to himself in class, but he misses a lot of class and failed last year. So, at the end of the year, he was encouraged to enter into an alternative education program, but he refused. What's up with Pablo? What is causing his failure at school?