



Up4Diversity

Empowering Young People and
Youth Workers to Become
Active Upstanders in the
Prevention of Violence Towards
LGBTIQ+ People in the
Digital Era





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Module 5. Community involvement: The Dialogic Model of Violence Prevention and Resolution

Changing socialization processes is only possible if all agents are involved and act coherently. **The whole community (including families, the neighbourhood, social entities, etc.) plays a key role in the improvement of youth coexistence.** Educational institutions can build communities that do not tolerate violence and where interactions are dialogic, respectful, solidary, and desired. Research has shown that, from the possibilities for community participation on educational institutions, the most effective forms for students' success are:

- 1. Decisive participation:** they are part in making relevant decisions in the institution, such as rules. Assemblies are a great example of decisive participation.
- 2. Assessment participation:** they can speak up to improve the community, being involved in educational processes or the institution itself.
- 3. Educational participation:** they participate in some of the ordinary activities and actions of the institution, and they also attend particular training opportunities. The institution wins more human resources to support learning



How can we facilitate community participation?

Everyone willing to improve the education given to youth can participate in the institution. To avoid always having the same people or profile of community participants, and increase more diversity, here you have some tips:

- **Be flexible in timetables, spaces, and interests**
- Look for and **encourage participation of those people and families who have traditionally had no voice in these spaces**, such as minorities or

non-academic families. This will help coherence and overcoming prejudices and stereotypes towards these groups.

- Make clear that egalitarian dialogue will be present, and **everyone's arguments will be listened to because they are unique.**
- Assemblies and meetings should **not only be informative but include decision-making or training.**
- **Use simple language**, avoid technicalities about the school organisation or learning processes.
- Meetings and assemblies should be organised so that they **foster that everyone has a chance to speak**, perhaps by having some smaller groups to discuss specific things
- **Meetings should be productive** and well-prepared. To avoid anyone feeling like they are wasting their time, key issues and decisions have to be discussed.
- **Disseminate as much as possible** within the community, using as many channels and resources as possible: take advantage of informal conversations when they show up at the institution, digital resources, neighbourhood entities and their resources, etc.
- **Value the existing participation and improve from that point.** Avoid a language of complaint because that demotivates and discourages participation.
- **Believe that the community is necessary to improve the educational quality.**

Typical models of conflict resolution

There exist 3 main models of conflict resolution:

- The **disciplinary model** was based on hierarchies and the role of the **authority (teachers) who are responsible for maintaining coexistence.** In this model, **norms are established by them, without the students' or families' participation, and they are applied top-down**, vertically. To ensure rule compliance, **sanctions are imposed against those who break the rules.** These disciplinary measures many times tag some students as conflictive, violent or rebels, thus reinforcing stereotypes and low expectations towards them changing; moreover, there is no reflection towards change, and students miss learning opportunities.

- The **mediation model** is an advance in some aspects: it includes dialogue during conflict resolution. Experts, that can be educators or students, impartially mediate conflict between parts and suggest solutions according to a pre-established rule by the authority.

Limitations:

- This model only reacts to existing conflict, it does not work on its prevention.
- Responsibility of coexistence is focused on a few people, those who mediate.
- Sometimes solutions are provided by the mediators and do not actually fit the parts; or, even worse, it does not take into account some situations where violence occurs, and where impartiality is

not an option, there don't exist two sides of the story.

- The **dialogic model involves the whole community through a constant dialogue** that allows to find out the causes of conflicts to solve them from the community itself, much sooner than they appear. Therefore, this approach is **focused on prevention**, through the creation of a collaborative atmosphere in which people participate in the creation of the norms as well as in the way to solve the conflicts; this creates much more understanding and meaning for all the people involved.



Dialogic Model of Violence Prevention and Resolution

The dialogic model⁹ is both a preventive and reactive conflict resolution model **based on dialogue as the main tool to overcome inequalities and violence. Consensus of co-existence norms by all involved parts is key, especially students.**

In this model, different opportunities and the conditions are set to ensure that everyone has equal chance to express themselves and find collective solutions. To make

this possible, it is essential to consider that everyone, no matter their socioeconomic status, cultural background, or academic level, have the ability to intervene and have opinions and arguments in the search of the collective norms.

The responsibility and ability to generate a good climate is not limited to any authority or expert, as it concerns all students, professionals, and community members. **The idea is to overcome power-positions and open a path towards more egalitarian relationships.**

Dialogue is central in the whole process of the creation of the norm and in its implementation, following the approaches of the procedural ethics and deliberative democracy (Elster, 2001). **Procedural ethics establishes that the efficiency in the decisions or agreements does not depend so much on their content, but mainly in the process that led to them: consensus.** As more and more diverse people are present, more arguments will appear, and consequently there will be more possibilities of obtaining norms that are valid for everyone. Deliberative democracy is based on the idea that dialogue and consensus are more effective than voting and confrontation of different opinions. That is because in voting, different positions are put against and the most voted is democratically established; however, in a deliberation, it is through arguments that it is possible that someone's initial position is modified.

Guidelines for the agreed creation of norms

In order for all norms to be respected by everyone, it is essential that students, teachers, educators, professionals, and the community agree on them. It is possible to organize a specific process to establish consensus around a rule or a set of rules within the whole educational community.

Certain conditions must be taken into consideration for this dialogic model to work in the creation of every norm.

1. It must have a direct relation with an important aspect in the life of the youth: this necessary connection can be done by rules that help them solve real co-existence problems. Usually, educators' proposals are based on our external perceptions of needs (such as punctuality or material care); however, it must be relevant for them.

2. There has to be clear support within the whole society: so that everyone agrees and support, at least in theory, that this norm is essential for good co-existence, inside and outside of the institution. For instance, even though we differ in the dressing styles, we can all agree to stand up against aggressions driven by a use of clothing that "does not match the gender".

3. This rule has to be frequently broken, even though it has verbal support of all society: unfortunately, it is common that some people mock or criticize others by their clothing choices.

4. It must answer to a behavior that is possible to eradicate: the norm must clearly specify the conflictive behavior, so that it is easily identified and possible to be changed.

5. By the overcoming of this conflict, the community gives an example to society, families, educators, and youth: with the consensus of a norm, not only this particular conflict is solved, but the community sees reinforced the ability to solved any future conflict, which is a great starting point to build norms and understand that understanding and improvement is possible.

7 steps to create a norm

How can we ensure dialogue and the participation of the whole community in the creation of norms? To decide and respect the norm, a dialogic process is offered which can last some weeks, based on 7 steps.

1. Organize a Mixed Committee to debate and offer a norm to the community. You can name it Zero-Violence Mixed Committee, Coexistence Mixed Committee, etc. This committee is created to guarantee that all agents are represented in the process of norm consensus based on the search of the best agreements, where the key is on the arguments and reasons given by people, and not on the status or position they have on the institution or community.

2. Introduce the norm proposal in a board of teachers or educators and in an assembly to the whole community, both with the highest participation possible. Why? To open up democratic spaces for everyone to have the opportunity to hear and/or participate in the creation of the norms, even though not everyone will participate.

3. Members of the Mixed Committee disseminate the norm, reaching every group or class where group representatives will collect comments, reflections, and the mechanisms to ensure the compliance of the norm. This is essential to guarantee it has direct relation with youth's lives.

4. Class or group's representatives debate to make the norm concrete and its application, with the support of the members of the Mixed Committee. Different insights collected are put together to reach a common proposal.

5. An Assembly is organized, in which group's representatives explain teachers, educators, families, and the community the results of their deliberations. Assessment by all these agents is also collected, bringing it back to the groups or classes with the presence of the educator and a member of the Mixed Committee.

6. The whole community watches over the norm compliance and its continuous revision. The Mixed Committee and the groups' representatives lead this action. This collective compliance and revision is necessary so that everyone is responsible and involved in the norm.

7. All this process is accompanied by training done through dialogic gatherings¹⁰, forums, and other agreed activities. Why? To guarantee that everyone can understand the depth and importance of all the concepts that justify this dialogic model of prevention and conflict resolution (procedural ethics, deliberative democracy, egalitarian dialogue, etc.).

ACTIVITY: CREATING NORMS FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST LGBTIQ VIOLENCE

Participants can share, considering what has been explained, a good example of violence against LGBTIQ youth that happens or can happen in their institution. Together, they will draw the first steps towards solving it following the dialogic model of violence prevention and resolution.

To know more:

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