

# **A holistic differentiated approach to bullying prevention: The role of students for inclusive systems**

Dr Paul Downes

Director, Educational Disadvantage Centre

Senior Lecturer in Education (Psychology)

Member of the European Commission Network of Experts on the Social Aspects of Education and Training (NESET I & II)

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St. Patrick's Campus, Drumcondra

Dublin City University

**paul.downes@dcu.ie**

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## BULLYING: A HIDDEN PROBLEM (Downes 2004)

“I’d have guards to guard me to stop anyone starting on me”  
(4<sup>th</sup> class, M, FG)

“I would put cameras on the walls so they would know who is bullying”  
(4<sup>th</sup> class, M, Q)

“bullys, blow up the school” (5<sup>th</sup> class, M, Q)

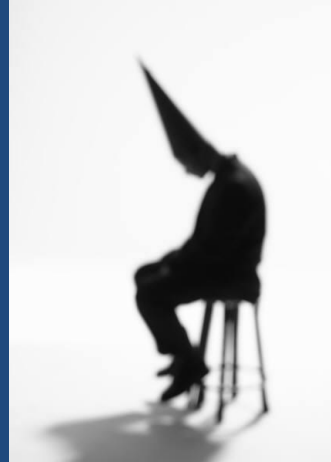
“I would make all the school a bullyfree zone” (6<sup>th</sup> class, M, Q)

“I would change all the bullies in my school to geeks” (6<sup>th</sup> class, F, Q)

“One of the biggest problems” in the school is bullying (5<sup>th</sup> class, M, FG) but “you don’t wanna be a rat” (5<sup>th</sup> class, M, FG)

“I would be absent because sometimes I get bullied” (5<sup>th</sup> class, M, Q)

– “No-one will end up in school if they keep getting bullied” (6<sup>th</sup> class, M, FG)



# Bullying, Student Voices and the Role of the Teacher: Bullying as Authoritarian Teaching



Downes (2004)

- ‘Have anger management courses for teachers’ (Secondary, F, FG)
- “The teachers shouting at you. That makes me really really down” (Age 13, F, Q)
- “if the teachers didn’t roar at you” (Age 13, F, Q)
- “Have an equal teaching system and sack ignorant snobby teachers...very harsh teachers usually make me stay out of school” (Age 16, M, Q)

# A Holistic Curricular Focus on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) for Bullying Prevention: Emotional Awareness and Students' Voices



A study of more than 213 programs found that if a school implements a quality SEL curriculum, they can expect better student behaviour and an 11 point increase in test scores (Durlak et al., 2011).

The gains that schools see in achievement come from a variety of factors—students feel safer and more connected to school and academic learning, children and teachers build strong relationships.

Durlak et al. (2011) highlight a range of SEL benefits indirectly related to bullying and school violence, for outcomes on SEL skills, Attitudes, Positive Social Behaviour, Conduct Problems, Emotional Distress and Academic Performance.

Durlak et al (2011) classroom teachers and other school staff effectively conducted SEL programs so these can be incorporated into routine educational activities and do not require outside personnel.

Sklad et al.'s (2012) meta-analysis of recent, school-based, universal programs concentrated on ones that promote development rather than prevent specific problems such as bullying.

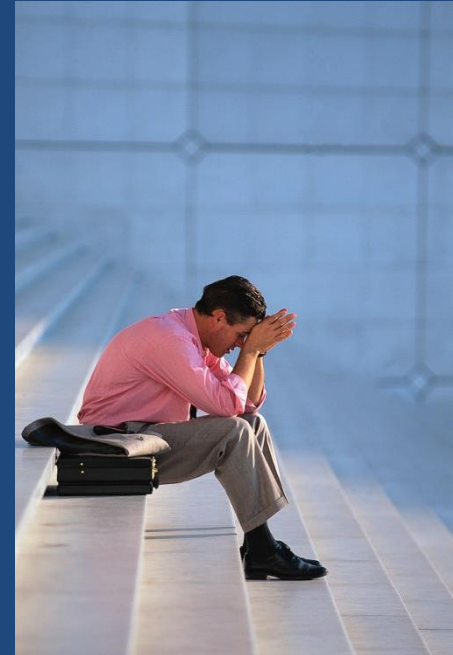
-SEL programs showed statistically significant effects on social skills, antisocial behaviour, substance abuse, positive self-image, academic achievement and prosocial behaviour.

Downes (2010) SEL across curricular areas: empathy in history, language and emotion in English, conflict role play in drama etc.

## Teachers' and Wider Support Services Role in Preventing the Consequences of Bullying (Downes & Cefai 2015): Building on Students' Experiences

Given the seriousness of the long-term impacts of bullying (Mental Health, Early School Leaving) a prevention strategy needs to encompass not only prevention of the bullying but ***prevention of the consequences*** of bullying through system level emotional and social supports

Supports could intervene at an early stage to prevent the escalation of experiential processes, such as selfdoubting and double victimising, described in a Swedish context (Thornberg et al., 2013).



Radliff et al. (2015) hopelessness as a mediator for bullying.  
-469 US middle school students, victims reported the highest levels of hopelessness and significantly higher scores compared with students not involved in bullying.  
Hopelessness was a mediator for victims, but not for bully-victims.

Thornberg's (2015) Swedish ethnographic fieldwork in two public schools (age 10 to 12 years):  
Resignation and a range of escape or avoidance behaviour, such as social withdrawal and avoiding others, as well as trying to be socially invisible in the classroom and other school settings.

- Also prevent consequences of aggressive communication for perpetrators through early Intervention (Downes & Cefai 2015)



## Classroom Climate and Bullying: Discriminatory Bullying

Elamé's (2013) 10 country European study regarding 'the fundamental importance' of teacher influence on discriminatory bullying

-Those immigrant and Roma students who think the teacher exhibits similar behaviour towards 'native' and immigrant and Roma children in the class are those bullied least in the last 3 months.

In contrast, 'those who declare that their teacher favours native children over immigrant/Roma students are more vulnerable to suffer some form of bullying. Specifically less than half (48 %) of the 123 [immigrant/Roma] children [across the 10 countries] who sense bias in the teachers' attitudes towards native classmates declare to have never been subjected to violence' (Elamé, 2013).



Those immigrant or Roma children who sense an imbalance in the teacher's attitudes to different ethnic groups in their class are also those who have been bullied with the highest frequency of the previous 3 months (Elamé, 2013).

These findings resonate with Bandura et al.'s (1961) Bobo Doll study on imitative aggression.

Greek study (Kapari and Stavrou, 2010) of 114 secondary school students:

In schools with high levels of bullying, students consider their treatment by adults to be unequal, the rules to be unfair, and student participation in decision-making to be very limited.



## Classroom Climate and Bullying: Questioning A Peer Defenders Approach in KiVa, Finland (Downes & Cefai 2015)

-Empirical evidence of increased bullying for peer interventions in some international contexts, evidence of student fear of the consequences of intervening.

-Recognition of bullying as a child welfare and child protection issue renders it problematic that responsibility may be displaced onto other children to provide support and active defending.

-Schools have a duty of care to the individual and not simply to the aggregate of children, so that even gains in the aggregate do not justify disproportionate risk to an individual

'defender' from a perpetrator entrenched in bullying behaviour and likely to target defenders that challenge him/her.

-*primum non nocere* (first do no harm)



**Inclusive Systems Approach** (Downes & Cefai 2015): There is a **striking commonality of interests with regard to strategic approaches for bullying prevention in schools and early school leaving prevention.**

These include:

- \* direct and indirect effects of bullying on early school leaving relevant to perpetrators, victims and bully-victims
- \* common systems of supports,
- \* common causal factors,
- \* teacher professional development and preservice preparation issues
- \* early warning systems to prevent the consequences of bullying through system level emotional, cognitive and social supports.



A ***commonality of system level response*** for both bullying and early school leaving prevention is not to state that the same individuals are necessarily at risk for both, though they may share a number of common risk factors.

# A Differentiated Approach to Involving Parents for Bullying Prevention: Family Support Services for High Risk Chronic Need

Systematic review by Lereya et al. (2013) involving 70 studies which concluded that both victims and bully/victims are more likely to be exposed to negative parenting behaviour, including abuse and neglect and maladaptive parenting.



Cross et al.'s (2012) Australian study - all grade levels from 1 (5–6-year olds) to 7 (12–13-year olds).

The family level activities worked in partnership with parents by building their awareness, attitudes and self-efficacy to role model and help their children to develop social competence and to prevent or respond to bullying. These activities also encouraged school and parent communication and parents' engagement with the school to reduce student bullying.

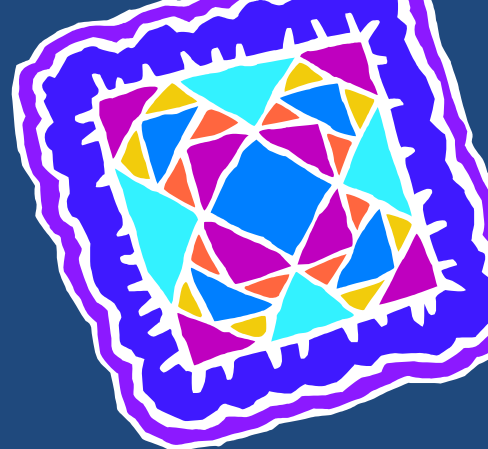
The high intensity intervention (wholeschool, capacity building support and ***active parent involvement***) is somewhat more effective than the moderate intensity intervention (whole-school and capacity building support only), and substantially more effective than the low intensity intervention (the standard school program with no capacity support).

Langford et al.'s (2014) Cochrane Review for the WHO on health promoting school interventions highlighted that 'The majority of studies only attempted to engage with families (rather than the community), most commonly by sending out newsletters to parents. Other activities included: family homework assignments, parent information evenings or training workshops, family events, or inviting parents to become members of the school health committee'.

Downes & Cefai (2015): Again this emphasis is overwhelmingly one where the parent is a passive recipient of information, with the exception of the example of the invitation for them to be members of the school health committee.

Downes (2014) Parental involvement is a dimension of children's rights





Downes & Cefai (2015)

**Recommendation: Establish a National Committee for Inclusive Systems in Schools in each EU Member State**

**Recommendation: Establish in every school a whole school implementation committee to focus on developing inclusive systems, with a specific focus on bullying and violence prevention, including discriminatory bullying**

This Whole School approach needs to include:

- Projects to Promote Student and Risk Groups' Input into Design of Bullying Prevention Resources, Especially for Older Students
- Processes to ensure that the voices and needs of minority students are heard regarding bullying and violence prevention, as well as more widely on school climate issues.

Downes & Cefai (2015):

Recommendation: Establish an individual family outreach strategy involving schools to engage families of chronic need, in conjunction with multidisciplinary teams and family support services

Recommendation: Establish an Integrated Prevention Strategy for Bullying and Early School Leaving to Promote Inclusive Systems in and around schools



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