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Understanding Bullying: Practical Problems and Implications

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Introduction

- Understanding and reducing bullying e.g., policies
- Observations (Schools: state, private and PRU) and interviews (group and 1-1, 84 children)
- Aim-Discuss and challenge common perceptions of bullying
- Definition: Repeated, intentional and power-imbalance (Olweus 1993)



'Bullying involves a clear imbalance of power'

- Bully-stronger (physically or psychologically)
- Foucault (1980): Power struggles and imbalances not always so clear
- Victim hits bully? Exclusion
- Popularity-peer/social power



'Bullying is Peer Abuse' (Olweus 1993)

- Teachers are not separate from school bullying
- Teachers have 'enormous power to manipulate the peer group' Eslea et al (2002, p.2)
- Teachers conscribed by school procedures
- Teachers influence and are influenced by bullying (Roland and Galloway 2002)
- Children 'picked on' by teachers and vice versa
- Foucault (1980)-Fluid power relations not static and in every relationship
- Institutional Power-Roles mediated, positioning



'Tell a Teacher'

- Bullying in front of teacher (often ignored) but rarely reported
- Bullied for 'grassing'
- Punishment e.g., shouted at, detention, isolation (side-effects), 'picked on'
- Bullying reoccurs
- Punished for being bullied e.g., isolation
- Institutional spectrums of bullying



'Bullying is Repeated'

- Persistence-repeatedly bullied by different people
- Victim's experience or behaviour of bullies
- How many repetitions?
- Bullying years despite interventions
- Fear



'Bullying is Intentional'

- 'Taking a mick is not bullying'
- Teasing associated with bullying
- Teasing everyday
- 'We didn't mean to do it,' 'Only joking'
- Escape responsibility
- Hurt by teasing but 'laughed it off'
- How can you prove intent? How much does it matter?

'A minority of people are bullied'



- Smith et al (1999) 2-20%
- Depends on measurement
- Green (2001): All children affected by bullying
- Stigma-Myers (2006)
- No bullies
- Victim-more than bully, 6 out of 32
- Children's experiences and articulation
- 'Picked on' rather than 'bullied'-children's language



'Bullying is Abnormal'

- Everyday Experiences in School
- 'Swot' vs 'thick' hostility and 'good enough'
- Physical violence e.g., kicking and shoving
- Ostracism (males/females)-e.g., P.E, 'no friends'
- Punishment-wrongly accused-detention and isolation (side-effects)
- 'Picked on' teacher-pupil and pupil-teacher
- Teacher as role model?



Implications

- Spectrums (severities) versus binaries (bullying and not bullying)
- Responsibility
- Fluidity of Power Relations
- Social Power
- Institutional Power
- Persistence-check reoccurrence



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