Πρόκειται για εργασία που εκπονήθηκε στα πλαίσια του μεταπτυχιακού προγράμματος Εκπαιδευτικής Ψυχολογίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο του Μάντσεστερ, στην Αγγλία. Εποπτεύουσα καθηγήτρια ήταν η κ. Rea Reason.

Pupil misbehaviour is a social phenomenon,

and its prevention lies in the teacher-pupil relationship

PUPIL MISBEHAVIOUR AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

2.1 Definition of misbehaviour

Defining misbehaviour appears to be very controversial. The element of subjectivity is strongly inserted in this field. Depends on teacher's perception of misbehaviour. Cultural biases and social perceptions could also contribute to the difficulty in defining the phenomenon. What is considered to be 'normal' e.g. forms of behaviour or certain ideas, in one society may be totally 'abnormal' in another (Saunders, 1979). The debate becomes more complicated because of the various terminology used when different professionals and individuals referred to this particular behaviour. The terms used to describe it are problem, troublesome, disruptive, disorderly, conduct disorder, and some are misinterpreted such maladjustment or deviant behaviour (Hollin, 1993).

A very often confusion is made with the 'maladjustment' behaviour. There are two types of maladjusted children: the emotionally and the socially. Both can display disruptive behaviour in the classroom (Saunders, 1979). However, the term indicates rather an administrative category and despite the fact that individual pathology plays a role in someone's behaviour, children typed as maladjusted and those typed as disruptive must be considered as different cases (McManus, 1995).

Teacher's perceptions and ideas, as already mentioned, determine the limits of pupil misbehaviour. Some have perceived it as behaviour that challenges the authority of the teacher or the school while others have recognised as basic characteristic the expenditure of inordinate amounts of teacher time and energy in order to bring off (Charlton and David, 1993).

Doyle, cited in McManus (1995), viewed the issue through the context of classroom structures:

> "any behaviour by one or more students that is perceived by the teacher to initiate a vector of action that competes with or threatens the primary vector of action at a particular moment in a classroom activity"(p.3)

According to this definition anything potentially can be misbehaviour.

Another definition, was given by Lawrence et al.

> "Behaviour which seriously interferes with the teaching process and/or seriously upsets the normal running of the school" (McManus, 1995, p.3).

The discussion here is focused on what exactly they mean by 'ordinary teaching' and 'normal school'.

Research done by the Educational Research Centre, at the University of Sheffield, cited in Charlton and David (1993), indicated that teachers perceive or encounter as disruptive behaviour:

- talking out of turn

- hindering other pupils

- making unnecessary noises

- calculated idleness or work avoidance

- not being punctual

- getting out of seat without permission

The survey also recorded more worrying types of disruptive behaviour such as:

- verbal abuse towards teachers

- physical aggression towards teachers

- physical aggression towards other pupils

- physical destructiveness.

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3. TEACHER-PUPIL RELATIONSHIP

The interaction between teacher and pupils plays an important role in the learning process. A teacher who early in the school year manages to establish a good relationship with his/her class, sets the bases for a co-operative climate, prevents some undesirable situations. Thus, he/she avoids much of occupational stress caused mainly from pupil misbehaviour and class management (Borg et al., 1991; Hart and Mongon, 1989).

Teacher-pupil relationships are formed and depended on school ethos. Studies have shown that pupils' behaviour in school is largely affected both by the school ethos and the classroom relationships with each individual teachers in the classroom (Hart and Mongon, 1989).

Evans, cited in Cohen and Manion (1983), elucidates the topics that refer to the term teacher-pupil relation: the influence of teachers on the immediate behaviour and the intellectual and social development of their pupils; the helping role of teachers in the mental health and adjustment of children; the children's' likes and dislikes with regard to their teacher; and the effects that daily contact with pupils has on teachers.

Many teachers discover sometime that their relationship with some poorly motivated to school work pupils is false. They may realise that it lacked warmth and mutual concern. Research evidence suggests that for a satisfactory relationship the teacher should underline the similarities rather than emphasise the differences between him/herself and his/her pupils. Pupils see their teacher as a model. Imitation as a learning practice is really important in learning skills and in the development of attitudes and it can be effective only in a satisfying relationship. Thus, pupils must see a successful teacher, his/her behaviour must be rewarded. Of course prestige and respect must be considered to be important elements of success (Saunders, 1979).

An effective teacher-pupil; relationship is depended on many variables some of them are beyond teacher's control. These can be, for instance, his/her personality or his/her

unconscious attitudes and values which may influence his/her interaction with the pupils (Upton, 1993). However, they can plan and work towards a better relationship. Something they are able to manipulate is what has been termed 'non-verbal immediacy behaviours'. They appear in the classroom available for communication. Thus, they can exchange messages with interpersonal closeness and warmth and contribute for more effective relationships (Cohen and Manion, 1983).

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5. PREVENTING PUPIL MISBEHAVIOUR

5.1 Whole school approach towards the prevention of pupil misbehaviour

The systems model presented briefly above suggested a whole school approach as the most effective way to encounter pupil misbehaviour. This suggestion is based on the principle that one of the numerous contexts which affect the individual pupil is the school. The quality of experiences which schools provide have been shown to have a major impact not only upon academic performances but also upon pupil's social and emotional functioning and therefore their behaviour (Charlton and David, 1993).

Schools which want to response and prevent pupil misbehaviour are likely to be more effective if they are organised at the institutional level. Many researchers have pointed school characteristics which appear to have positive impact upon pupil behaviour.

From the overall suggestions it is made clear that speaking of a whole-school policy, that is effectively preventing pupil misbehaviour, demands to look not only at classroom processes and punishments but also at school philosophy and associated rules, at the internal/external communication systems, at staff liaison, at pastoral responsibilities, at the effectiveness of the curriculum, at the meaning of professionalism of all staff members. Furthermore, it is necessary to explore ways of assessing, and perhaps changing, the school 'climate' (Charlton and David, 1993).

Of course this change is not easy to occur. Beliefs, attitudes and institutional practices are well established long time ago and changes in every social context do not occur rapidly. On the other hand, every individual has formed his/her own behaviour

towards pupils according to their perceptions and thus it is an oversimplification to present teachers behaviour as uniform (Hart and Mongon, 1989).

McManus (1995), argues that change is always possible: "social structures persist only with the support (active, passive or unintended) of their constituents. Those people within a school who wish its organisation to be other than it is are that part of the organisation that is already changing. To believe that only thought is unconstrained, and that the economic and political system blocks progress, is only partly true-if true at all with respect to life in classrooms" (p.177).

5.2 Prevention through teacher-pupil relationship

All the approaches presented above have evidenced that school and classroom processes may sometimes become cause for pupil misbehaviour. They also have pointed methods for intervention and prevention and is made clear that preventive processes pass mainly through teacher-pupil relationship.

If teachers consider themselves successful professionals when they affect pupil's attitudes, feelings, actions and academic achievements then they have to accept that they can affect them in a reverse way in unacceptable or undesirable ways. Kounin, cited in Charlton and David (1993), stressed that there is no difference in terms of effectiveness in dealing with behaviour problems among teachers. Nevertheless successful teachers were appeared to be far more adept at preventing them.

Indeed, the most effective way to encounter every problematic situation at all levels is surely to work to prevent it arising from the very beginning. Another good reason for choosing prevention is that problem behaviour when it become serious demands more time, energy and greater expertise than lesser ones. If classroom processes are sometimes considered to be responsible for misbehaviour to arise in the same rational may help to prevent from occurring or escalating (Charlton and David, 1993).

The analysis of styles of interaction between individual teachers and their pupils has been recognised as a major factor for the notion and understanding of any behaviour. Teachers should be aware of these mechanisms of dynamic interactions and how they work as a trigger for problem behaviour. Teachers should also be sensitive to the differing causal mechanisms which may operate in each case. This knowledge is essential for a complete assessment 'picture' and for determining ways in which

appropriate management skills can be implemented in order to ameliorate and prevent disruptive behaviour (Charlton and George, 1993).

Hargreaves, cited in Hart and Mongon (1989), reported that in a study where distinguished two types of teacher: the 'deviance-provocative' and the 'deviance-insulative'. The first teacher blames the pupils for hostility, resistance and commitment to their deviance, and his/her handling just exacerbate the problem. It is well evidenced that incidences of misbehaviour are increased when the teacher adopted rigid authoritarian methods of establishing discipline. The second type of teacher, the 'deviance-insulative', whose handling serves to inhibit misbehaviour in the classroom considers that the conditions are at fault and he is responsible to ameliorate them.

The deviance insulative, want pupils to want their schooling. In order to contribute in the change of conditions and reduce misbehaviour they must be very careful in their teaching and their actions inside classroom. Humoured, committed and interesting teaching in combination with planned and progressive programme of personal and social education for the class teacher or other staff member can be much more effective than shouting and exclusions (David, 1993).

Very crucial in preventing misbehaviour is the use of reinforcement. Charlton and David, (1993), argued that errors such as non reinforcement of appropriate behaviour and reinforcement of inappropriate behaviour can have opposite results and encourage misbehaviour.

Recently has been recognised the important role of self-concept in helping to determine behaviour. For instance, misbehaviour may be an attempt from underachievers to attract teachers' attention. Feelings of failure and inferiority is well known that cause low self-concept and possibly misbehaviour. Therefore, it is really important for a teacher to keep pupil's self-esteem high, in order to achieve a peaceful climate in the classroom. Teacher characteristics such as empathy, unconditional positive regard for pupils and genuineness seem likely to work well towards this direction. Empathic understanding puts teacher in pupils' position and he/she can experience pupils' 'inner world'. Through the revealed feelings it is understood their behaviour. The second characteristic implies teachers' interest and willingness to

help. Genuineness is perceived by pupil as honesty and openness and creates the right conditions for a trusting relationship (Charlton and David, 1993).

Lovey (1992), described her attempt as a teacher to build up pupils self-esteem. She stated that actual co-operation and discussion, even challenging, during lesson time is the most important factor. While at the beginning it was difficult to express their own feelings, though they were encouraged by the fact that whatever they were saying was being taken seriously and respected, finally their confidence grew.

If pupils view the teacher as a model he/she must appear very self-controlled in his/her behaviour inside and outside school, co-operative and respectful to pupils, parents and colleagues, faithful to school directions and rules. Thus, pupils indirectly learn some skills for co-operative and acceptable behaviour. Teachers who manage to form good relationships with their pupils and earn their respect are more likely to earn prestige and respect and therefore have their behaviour modelled (Charlton and David, 1993).

Non-verbal skills have indirect effects, can encourage or discourage disruption and teachers should be aware of their effects. Being at ease with the class, use of non-verbal gestures, eye to eye contact, rhythm and emphasis in voice, and change of posture keep awake pupil's interest and help in prevention of misbehaviour.

A number of basic classroom rules have been developed by the preventive approaches to disruption. The philosophy of these rules is contained in the following sentences:

- "pupils' behaviour is influenced by the teacher's behaviour

- teachers with effective classroom control are skilled at avoiding and de-escalating problem behaviour

- specific techniques of classroom management and control can be described, practised and acquired by teachers

- teachers should take responsibility for developing their skills and should be supported in doing so by their schools" (Charlton and David, 1993, p.221).

Hart and Mongon (1989), suggested a preventive approach where the teacher has a researchers' role. In this 'teacher as a researcher' model researching is a means of emancipation for the teacher in terms of taking more control of their professional lives by implementing a research in their own practice in the classroom. However, it seems that the motivation for the development of this preventive approach lies rather in the amelioration of occupational environment for the teachers.

A successful preventing practice demands skilled and committed work by the classroom teacher. He/she must exhibit sensitivity, imagination and pragmatic attitudes about his/her pupils and their ideas. A close, but always respectful, relationship is essential and discussion in the classroom is a good way to keep the links. Alienation and lack of contact can easily cause disruption. Simple interest about pupil's ideas and their 'inner world' brings interest for teachers' attitudes and demands. Consistency in behavioural expectations from the teachers' side is also essential. Pupil's knowledge about these expectations helps them to respond in a favourable way thus determining their limits. Besides this, studies have evidenced that if teachers provide meaningful initial guidelines and freedom to exercise increasing control, it is likely that most pupils will respond to the challenge and benefit from this responsibility (Charlton and David, 1993).

6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Pupil misbehaviour can be considered as a social phenomenon from the moment that occurs in a particular social context which contains its own dynamics and unique interactions between its members (teacher-pupils, peer group). Furthermore, misbehaviour can be understood by the social analysis of pupil's social context, extended from his/her nuclear environment to the wider society of which child, family, school and all are members (Hollin, 1993).

Regarding the prevention of this phenomenon the term seems to be a little confusing because it can be divided in two types of prevention. Prevention from occurring in the first place and preventing a pupil of doing it again after he/she has done it once. The first is more difficult because it is impossible for the teacher to understand each individual's needs at any time -needs which may be expressed in a misbehaving way- and act in a preventive way.

As it showed at the above chapter the prevention of pupil misbehaviour passes through the relationship between teacher and pupil. Teachers both individually and collectively as a staff, make a difference and can have positive impacts upon their pupil's behaviour (Charlton and David, 1993).

However, it has been argued that these relationships are only one dimension of the experience of schooling and that school's ethos and other external factors can be responsible for disruptive behaviour. Such factors make the preventive task very difficult and result in pupil's alienation from schooling despite teacher's struggles (Hart and Mongon, 1989).

However, teachers should keep on trying because are the ones who first will encounter a disruptive behaviour from a particular pupil. By intervening and preventing that they prevent a future misbehaviour in the wider community context which may have unpleasant impacts in society as well as in the individuals' life.

It seems that teachers and theorists have not understand how important the prevention of pupil misbehaviour is. Different researchers have evidenced that point, e.g. the Teacher-Child Interaction Project by Berger et al., cited in Hollin, (1993), and the learning-psychological theories have showed ways of understanding the causes and methods for intervention and prevention in the classroom and in educational settings.

Especially systems model, labelling theory and ecosystemic approach have focus in prevention through teacher-pupil relationship and in factors which teachers should keep in mind and take care in his/her behaviour in order to achieve prevention. Teachers do not seem to be aware and maybe they should get some training towards a preventive direction. Educational theorists on the other hand seem to be more interested in intervention than in prevention.

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