

VIOLENCE REDUCTION INITIATIVE IN SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF SANTA CATARINA

INICIATIVA DE REDUÇÃO DAS VIOLÊNCIAS NAS ESCOLAS: O CASO DE SANTA CATARINA

INICIATIVA PARA LA REDUCCIÓN DE LAS VIOLENCIAS EN LAS ESCUELAS: EL CASO DE SANTA CATARINA



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ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the actions that have been organized by teams from the Centers for Education and Prevention of Violence at School (NEPREs). NEPRE is linked to the Policy on Education, Prevention, Attention and Assistance to Violence at School, implemented by the State Department of Education (SED) of the Santa Catarina. The empirical basis of this text is a documentary research, of a qualitative nature. It was evident that the actions developed by the nuclei oscillate between specific measures and those that demand financial investment, on personnel and on physical structure. The policy on which NEPRE is based is valid, but requires vitality. From the legislative point of view, it constitutes a policy of the state education network, receives training incentives from the SED and seeks to establish a partnership with the protection network that is part of the school. NEPRE can be considered a promising initiative, however, it is an action that demands consolidation.

KEYWORDS: Violence. Public school. Santa Catarina. NEPRE.

RESUMO: *Este artigo analisa as ações que vêm sendo organizadas pelas equipes dos Núcleos de Educação e Prevenção às Violências na Escola (NEPREs). O NEPRE está vinculado à Política de Educação, Prevenção, Atenção e Atendimento às Violências na Escola, implementada pela Secretaria de Estado de Educação (SED) de Santa Catarina. A base empírica deste texto é uma pesquisa documental, de natureza qualitativa. Evidenciou-se que as ações desenvolvidas pelos núcleos oscilam entre medidas pontuais e as que demandam de investimento financeiro, de pessoal e de estrutura física. A política que embasa o NEPRE possui validade, mas demanda de vitalidade. Do ponto de vista legislativo, constitui uma política da rede estadual de educação, recebe incentivos formativos da SED e busca estabelecer parceria com a rede de proteção que faz parte da escola. O NEPRE pode ser considerado uma iniciativa promissora, contudo, trata-se de uma ação que requer consolidação.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Violências. Escola Pública. Santa Catarina. NEPRE.*

RESUMEN: *Este artículo analiza las acciones que han sido organizadas por los equipos de los Núcleos de Educación y Prevención de la Violencia Escolar (NEPREs). El NEPRE está vinculado a la Política de Educación, Prevención, Atención y Asistencia a la Violencia en la Escuela, implementada por la Secretaría Estadual de Educación (SED) del estado de Santa Catarina. La base empírica de este texto es una investigación documental, de naturaleza cualitativa. Se evidenció que las acciones desarrolladas por los núcleos oscilan entre medidas puntuales y aquellas que demandan inversión financiera, en personal y en estructura física. La política en la que se basa el NEPRE es válida, pero requiere vitalidad. Desde el punto de vista legislativo, constituye una política de la red educativa estatal, recibe incentivos de formación de la SED y busca establecer una alianza con la red de protección que forma parte de la escuela. El NEPRE puede considerarse una iniciativa promissoria, sin embargo, es una acción que demanda consolidación.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Violencias. Escuela pública. Santa Catarina. NEPRE.*

Introduction

In a study on public initiatives to reduce violence that occur in the school context, Gonçalves and Spósito (2002) stated that in Brazil, policies to reduce violence in the educational context have their origin in the state and municipal sphere, with the main characteristic of discontinuous and fragmented actions. Along the same lines, the research developed by Frick (2016) analyzed government strategies for preventing violence at school in the 26 (twenty-six) Brazilian states, plus the Federal District, and identified 19 (nineteen) state-level strategies, with the body precursor to the State Departments of Education. Of these, 17 (seventeen) were classified as isolated and fragmented initiatives.

In this sense, for Frick, Menin, Tognetta and Del Barrio (2019) actions to combat and prevent violence in the educational context require systematized planning according to the reality of each context (state, region, school). For this reason, it is essential that we understand the understanding that state public bodies have in relation to this problem, therefore, in this article, our analyzes will be centered on the initiative of the state of Santa Catarina. (FRICK, 2016; TESSARO, 2022).

From the 1990s onwards, the state of Santa Catarina began to show concern about the phenomenon of violence, specifically, a type of violence that makes coexistence among students impossible, *bullying*. Therefore, it established the Program to Combat Violence through Law no. 14,651, of January 12, 2009, which in its article 4 establishes: “for the implementation of this Program, the school unit will create a multidisciplinary team, with the participation of teachers, students, parents and volunteers, to promote didactic activities, informational, guidance and prevention.” (SANTA CATARINA, 2009; TESSARO, 2022).

In 2011, Santa Catarina created the Education, Prevention, Attention and Assistance Policy for violence at School, which established in all state schools what State Law No. Center for Education and Prevention of Violence (NEPRE), which advocates the continued training of professionals who work in the state network on the themes of violence at school, with the central objective of promoting education, prevention, care and assistance in situations of violence involving subjects who are part of the school context (SANTA CATARINA, 2018a; TESSARO, 2022).

Considering this initiative, this text aims to analyze the actions that have been organized by the Centers for Education and Prevention of Violence at School (NEPREs), formed by professionals who work at the State Department of Education (NEPRE/SED), by professionals who work in the Regional Education Coordinators (NEPREs/CREs) and, by the actors

(teachers, students, families and the community that make up the protection network) of state public schools (NEPREs/Schools), since the implementation of the Education Policy, Prevention, Attention and Assistance to Violence at school, by the state of Santa Catarina in 2011 (SANTA CATARINA, 2011).

Contextualizing the initiative of the state of Santa Catarina: history of confronting violence

In 2010, “SED carried out a survey involving the 1,350 (one thousand three hundred and fifty) school units in the state public network, aiming to map information about episodes of violence in the school context.” (TESSARO, 2022, p. 88). This research showed deficiencies “in the network articulation to assist children and adolescents, education workers and families who suffer violence, in addition to the difficulties of the school itself in dealing with the phenomenon.” (SANTA CATARINA, 2018a, p. 13).

The Violence Education, Prevention, Attention and Assistance Policy was aligned with the State Education Plan, receiving support from state legislation through Law No. 14,408, of April 10, 2008 (SANTA CATARINA, 2008) and Law No. 14,651, on January 12, 2009 (SANTA CATARINA, 2009) consolidating itself in 2011 in all educational units in the state, as a Center of Education and Prevention of Violence at School, the so-called NEPREs. That same year, the first edition of the pedagogical notebook was published that guides and informs state education professionals about this initiative (SANTA CATARINA, 2011; TESSARO, 2022).

This law is based on a set of legal systems and public policies that aim to promote human rights, among which the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Federal Constitution of 1988; Constitution of the State of Santa Catarina; Child and Adolescent Statute; Law guidelines and bases of national education; National Human Rights Program; State Law No. 14,651/2009; Resolution No. 4/2010; Resolution No. 7/2010; Law no. 11,340/2006; Law no. 11,525/2007; National Plan for the Promotion of Citizenship and Human Rights for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvestites and Transsexuals (2009); National Education Plan; National Education Plan (SANTA CATARINA, 2011, p. 16-17, our translation).

Considering these legal frameworks, NEPRE was formally established in 2011 in the 1,350 (one thousand three hundred and fifty) schools, distributed in 36 (thirty-six) Regional Education Coordinations (CREs), which make up the state education network, in a format of multidisciplinary teams, involving the community (fathers, mothers, students, teachers, other employees in the educational context), representatives of bodies external to the school, such as

the Guardianship Council and the Social Assistance Secretariat, belonging to the state of Santa Catarina (SANTA CATARINA, 2011; TESSARO, 2022). The objective assumed by these teams was to “implement new knowledge, new methodologies, with the involvement of all social segments, in the commitment to take care of the school, as a social and educational space” (SANTA CATARINA, 2018a, p. 11).

To this end, NEPRE has three structural levels, namely: i) NEPRE/SED team, composed of a professional who assumes coordination responsibility, technicians from the Management of the State Network Management Directorate and technicians from the other SED directorates, Assistants Social and Psychologists; ii) NEPRE/CRE team, formed by a coordinator, CRE technicians, Social Workers and Psychologists; iii) NEPRE/Schools, composed of a coordinator, a teaching representative, a student representative, a representative of parents and/or guardians, a representative of leaders from around the school (SANTA CATARINA, 2018a).

Each of these teams has specific functions, namely the NEPRE/SED team, which involves the development of a management and coordination plan, planning of coexistence, prevention and coordination of intersectoral partnerships to address situations of violence in schools. The NEPRE/CRE team seeks to welcome, listen and monitor situations brought up by the NEPREs /Schools teams, as well as to guide conflict mediation, develop plans and actions to prevent violence in schools. Finally, the main task of NEPREs /Schools is to plan prevention strategies and manage cases of violence that occur in their daily lives. In other words, the responsibilities of each team include dialogue, analysis and the adoption of pedagogical guidelines, so that education professionals, at their different levels, act in the education and prevention of issues related to violence in schools.

Methodological path

The empirical basis of this text is based on documentary research, of a qualitative nature. According to Gil (2002), documentary research is similar to bibliographical research because it uses printed sources and/or available on *websites* of public and private bodies. Data collection was carried out on the SED *website*, using the following descriptors as search filters: NEPRE; Education, Prevention, Attention and Response to Violence at School Policy. There was no delimitation of a time frame in the search and selection of materials, since the text aims to analyze the initiative to prevent violence in schools in the state of Santa Catarina.

Thus, all news, statistical reports and other published materials, which mentioned one of the filters used, were analyzed in full, following the precepts of content analysis indicated by Bardin (2011), primarily, using the technique of thematic analysis, which consists of defining registration units. The recording units in this study were constituted based on the empirical materialities that were most frequently evidenced within the analyzed materials, which made up the categories present in this study.

In total, we accessed 76 documents, which were analyzed and categorized. In table 1, we present the categorization of the identified initiatives.

Table 1 – Categorization of initiatives to prevent and combat violence

Categories	Registration Units	Percentage/number
Campaigns	Campaign to improve social interaction	50% (n= 38)
	Campaign: Family Day at school	
	Campaign: Culture of peace at school	
	Campaign to commemorate National Human Rights Day	
	Campaign: Respect in schools	
	Speeches	
	Gymkhanas	
Teacher training	Training offered by SED to coordinators of NEPREs / CREs	25% (n= 19)
	Training offered by CREs to NEPREs /Schools coordinators	
NEPRE online platform	Creation of the online NEPRE platform	13.15% (n= 10)
Development of informative materials	Booklet developed by SED	6.57% (n= 5)
	Pedagogical booklet on preventing violence at school developed by SED	
Reports	Online NEPRE Platform Records Report	5.28% (n= 4)
	Report on the types of violence that occurred in the school context	

Source: Prepared by the authors

The categories present the actions that have been organized by the NEPRE/SED, NEPREs/CREs and NEPREs/Schools teams since the implementation of the Violence

Education, Prevention, Attention and Assistance Policy. Next, we will analyze and discuss the data collected through the documentary research carried out.

Analysis and discussion of research data

We will present, following the text, the results of the documentary research based on the five categories that emerged from the thematic analysis. The first encompasses the campaigns created by the NEPREs /Schools teams. The second deals with teaching training provided by the NEPRE/SED team and the NEPREs / CREs teams. The third concerns the creation of a platform for recording cases of violence, NEPRE online. The fourth refers to the development of informative materials, created and published by the NEPRE/SED team. Finally, the reports category mentions the records made by the NEPREs /Schools teams on the NEPRE online platform.

Campaigns

The campaigns total 50% (n= 38) of the actions carried out by the NEPREs teams, among which the following stand out: campaign to improve social coexistence; campaign that establishes Family Day at school; culture of peace campaign in schools; campaign to commemorate National Human Rights Day; respect campaign in schools; lectures and competitions. These initiatives are promoted, for the most part, by the NEPREs /Schools teams, which are characterized as punctual and fragmented actions, meaning that they do not have continuity, they were created and applied in a short period.

This type of action, although aligned with the objectives of NEPRE, does not contribute to the process of resolving conflicts and reducing cases of violence, as they are initiatives aimed at the student public, it is not a pedagogical project of the school, its main objective is control and discipline in the classroom. Thus, what happens through these initiatives is the attempt to subject children and adolescents to the power of adults, which presupposes increased surveillance, rules, and punishments to deal with these problems (VINHA; NUNES, 2020). Cases like this, according to Tognetta *et al.* (2021) are characterized as ineffective, as they ignore the complexity of the problem.

Along the same lines, it corroborates the study by Zechi and Vinha (2022) that violence at school constitutes a multifactorial phenomenon and cannot be understood and managed in an isolated and fragmented way. The path indicated by the authors is to create learning

opportunities in the face of conflicting situations, seeking dialogic, respectful, and democratic solutions. However, what is observed among Brazilian studies on this topic is that “there is a tendency to point to the creation of rules and specific measures such as information and awareness actions about the phenomenon, which are important, but must be the beginning of a systematized and broad work.” (FRICK; MENIN; TOGNETTA; DEL BARRIO, 2019, p. 1167).

Campaigns, such as those carried out by public schools in Santa Catarina, are important, however, we reiterate that they must serve as the trigger for systematic and continuous work to be developed by the NEPREs teams. To this end, teacher training and training deserves emphasis, especially with regard to the way of acting and relating to students involved in cases of violence.

Teacher training

Teacher training, in our analysis, understood as teacher training, appears with 25% (n=19) of the actions carried out. However, it is important to differentiate between this percentage. From 2011 to the present, only four training meetings were provided by the NEPRE/SED team to the coordinators of the NEPREs / CREs teams, with these professionals being considered as multipliers and responsible for 15 training actions aimed at the coordinators of the NEPREs /Schools. If we consider the 36 CREs that the state has, less than half promoted some type of training aimed at NEPRE /School coordinators. Another important factor, found in the analysis of the documents, is that the contents of all training meetings published on the SED website dealt only with the implementation of the policy and strengthening of NEPREs in CREs and schools, that is, we did not find any document that made mention of a specific training on violence issues.

Unfortunately, the lack of training of education professionals to deal with the problem of violence at school is not an isolated case. There is a consensus among different studies (AVILÉS, 2013; TREVISOL; CAMPOS, 2016) on the need for initial and continued training of professionals who work in the educational context, considering the multiple demands of everyday life, including the issue of interpersonal conflicts. Especially, because the development of public policy projects and actions has demonstrated “clear theoretical limits in their elaboration, they forward booklets and awareness campaigns, hotline reports and other outsourcing strategies [...] such as appointing the police at school or [...] injudicious referrals to the guardianship council.” (TOGNETTA; DAUD, 2018, p. 380, our translation).

To better train those who train, the study carried out by Frick, Menin, Tognetta, and Del Barrio (2019, p. 1174) points to the need to solidify an anti-violence project in schools, for this it is necessary for it to be part of the “Political Project Pedagogical [...], of the school, in which such actions are planned, systematic, intentional, which [...] contribute to making interpersonal relationships, in the school environment, more supportive, fair, cooperative and respectful.”

In line with these reflections, Tognetta *et al.* (2020, p. 4, our translation) state that the training of teachers and managers, on the topic of violence at school, must have the “intent of generating transformations in the school based on proposals for differentiated actions and inserted in the curriculum aimed at mediating conflicts, improving coexistence and the consequent reduction in violence.” To achieve this, it is important to consider three elements that are interconnected in this process, namely: the personal path; the curricular route and the institutional route, as according to Knoener, Santos and Souza (2020), when it comes to coexistence, the school is responsible for some functions, among them, the organization and construction of pedagogical proposals for preventing and confronting violence, which must be anchored by the school’s Pedagogical Political Project (PPP).

Among the training possibilities that can be used in the educational context aimed at preventing and confronting violence, Tessaro and Trevisol (2020, p. 45, our translation) highlight

those that provide professionals with theoretical-practical knowledge; the use of problem situations from the school itself, from everyday life, as mobilizers of learning processes, reflection and decision-making in relation to the management of these situations; valuing moments of exchange between professionals, cultural background, experiences of teachers to address problem situations in a more assertive way.

In this way, we corroborate the research by Tessaro (2022) who highlights that although the state of Santa Catarina has been a pioneer in implementing a policy to prevent violence at school, it still faces challenges in terms of training education professionals to work facing this demand. Therefore, we consider the need for both SED and higher education institutions to include initial and continuing teacher training courses, studies and discussions regarding the phenomenon of violence.

NEPRE online platform

The creation of the online platform totaled 13.15% (n= 10) of the actions carried out and published on the SED website. It is a support tool for NEPRE teams to record violent situations that occur in everyday schools. This initiative eliminates the need to use manual reports, as it improves the work and generates data regarding the types of violence, typifies the causes of violence at school, illustrates the procedures adopted for management and interventions, in addition to enabling the monitoring of cases.

The creation of the online NEPRE platform took place in 2017 and aims to meet the requirements of article 6 of Law No. 13,185, of November 6, 2015, which deals with the production and publication of reports on the occurrence of violence for planning actions prevention and coping (BRASIL, 2015). According to the documents that cover information about this category, one of the schools' greatest difficulties was recording cases of violence, as well as forwarding them. However, it is understood that the preparation of notification actions does not guarantee that coexistence problems will be eliminated at the school.

We know that the use of digital platforms is an ally in combating violence, as, according to Marques and Galindo (2019), records of cases of violence guarantee more accurate data, which can collaborate with combat actions organized both by the external protection network and by the school itself. However, despite the initiative being considered positive, information about it is scarce.

Records of events and actions taken to resolve them are relevant, but not sufficient, as the phenomenon of violence “requires educational actions that focus, for example, on improving the quality of relationships, education in values and socio-moral feelings and establishing bonds of security and support.” (FRICK, 2016, p. 138).

Therefore, Abramovay, Castro, Silva, and Cerqueira (2016), when carrying out research to diagnose violence in schools, recommend, in addition to collecting quantitative data, investing in qualitative actions aimed at preventing this problem. To this end, participation, especially by students, in conjunction with the field of educational policies, at the level of schools and the Brazilian State, is essential.

Development of informative materials

The development of informative materials represented 6.57% (n= 5) of the actions carried out, among which two materials stand out, a booklet and a pedagogical notebook for preventing violence at school, both developed by the NEPRE/SED team. These are materials that present the Education, Prevention, Attention and Response to Violence at School Policy for all NEPRE teams, in addition to providing information on different situations involving violence, citing forms of prevention and management. Furthermore, the booklet presents information from the legal and human rights areas and addresses issues linked to the rights and duties of the school in the face of cases of violence that occur in everyday life.

Although the respective materials are considered important, as they address and characterize the initiative of the state of Santa Catarina in preventing and confronting violence at school, among other topics, such as: drugs, gender, sexually transmitted diseases, *bullying*, and other types of violence, we consider that the materials, by themselves, are not capable of mobilizing participants in the NEPREs teams, as well as the school community, but if linked to continuing education proposals, they would have a greater impact.

The creation and publication of materials that do not come close to the reality of schools contribute little to the performance of education professionals. Therefore, Knoener, Santos, and Souza (2020) indicate some guidelines that are essential for the construction of materials that are not only informative, but above all, training. Among them, study proposals stand out on: the construction of ethical personality; constructive language; the rules; conflicts; class assemblies; sanctions; conflict mediation at school; the *bullying*; teacher training.

With regard to study proposals for professionals who are part of NEPRE teams, Tessaro (2022) highlights the following themes: strengthening NEPRE teams; violence at school: theoretical concepts; and, prevention, mediation, and care strategies. It is worth highlighting that the development of the training process values moments of individual and collective study by professionals, and also includes the discussion of problem situations in everyday life in schools.

Reports

The reports represented 5.28% (n= 4) of the documents analyzed. These are the results of the online NEPRE platform, whose available reports refer to the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021, respectively.

In 2018, 125 school units registered on the online platform, totaling 609 recorded situations of violence and *bullying*. Among the types of violence that stood out the most were: verbal violence (166 records), followed by physical violence (151 records) and with 52 records, persecution/intimidation, and *bullying*. The most frequent places where these situations occurred were: classroom (146 records); school yard (79 records); corridors (66); outside school premises (44 records) (SANTA CATARINA, 2018b).

In 2019, using the same online tool, 312 school units registered violence, totaling 1,272 records. Among the violent acts that stood out the most: physical violence (887 records); verbal violence (877 records); stalking/intimidation (284 records); bullying (234 records). Regarding the location of the events: classroom (1,126 records); courtyard (386 records); corridors (235 records) (SANTA CATARINA, 2019).

In 2020, there was a decrease in records due to the period of suspension of in-person classes due to the pandemic, with only 133 cases registered in 63 school units. Regarding the description of the most common types of reported violence, the following stand out: verbal violence (28 records); physical violence (26 records); physical and verbal violence (15 records); *cyberbullying* (9 records); suicide attempts (7 records). The most common places where these attacks occurred were: classroom (47 records); proximity to the school (18 records); sports court (7 records). Regarding the motivations for the attacks, 48 of these were caused by behavioral and emotional difficulties; another 7 were caused by religious intolerance, ethnic-racial, and gender identity (SANTA CATARINA, 2020).

In 2021, only 29 school units registered cases of violence, totaling 54 records. The largest number of records refers to cases of physical violence (7 records); followed by *bullying* (6 records) and verbal violence (5 records). Of these situations, 14 occurred near the school and 12 in the classroom. (SANTA CATARINA, 2021).

The data presented by the online tool presents the current panorama of school institutions located in the state of Santa Catarina. We highlight that records of violence in schools, with special emphasis on verbal and physical violence, and the place where this type of situation occurs, primarily the classroom, deserve attention.

From this perspective, we highlight that research data regarding the problem of violence in public schools located in mesoregions of the state of Santa Catarina, highlight the need for continuity in the training processes of professionals who work in the school context, as the return to school after -pandemic has distanced the culture of peace in schools (ZECHI; VINHA, 2022). In this sense, the challenge for the NEPREs teams continues to be to contribute to the creation of schools as well as to strengthen state policy, which emphasizes the importance of promoting education actions, prevention, attention, and assistance to violence at school.

Final remarks

The data analyzed in this article shows that even though NEPRE, as an Education, Prevention, Attention and Assistance Policy for Violence at School, constitutes a pioneering initiative with regard to preventing and confronting violence at school, challenges, and difficulties remain, especially with regard to the consolidation of the school as a space for coexistence. Research data such as Tessaro (2022) has highlighted that NEPRE is an initiative that has validity, but lacks vitality. Changing this condition implies public incentives, a defined calendar of actions and financial investments, physical structure and personnel, dialogue with and between schools, CREs, SED and other institutions that are part of the social protection network and, mainly, a systematized agenda of ongoing actions, aimed at preventing violence and promoting coexistence.

Given the data analyzed in this study, we emphasize the need for the Policy that supports NEPRE's actions in the state of Santa Catarina to be monitored and evaluated, in order to actually meet the demands of everyday school life, primarily those involving situations of violence. Likewise, we emphasize the importance of working in an intersectoral and multi-professional network, with and among the school community, aiming to ensure that the system of guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents is actually fulfilled.

The data presented and analyzed in this text confirm the academic and social relevance of studies of this nature, of other initiatives, such as NEPRE, with emphasis on objectives, purposes and constant evaluation of the path. Studies of this nature can provide theoretical and practical support regarding the challenges and gaps to be faced in the daily lives of schools. We understand the importance of the sequence of research that can contribute to the understanding and development of strategies for confronting and managing violence at school, expanding the analyzes to other initiatives, whether at municipal, state and/or federal levels.

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