

Recommendation directed to the delegation, alla NGO participant, OSCE, ODIHR:

## **The Kungälv Model – Responding to Social Unrest and Intolerance at School**

### **General Starting Point**

Social unrest among students is an increasingly more common phenomenon, which manifests itself in different ways in our schools. Students skip classes, behave disruptively during class, or oppress and harass people in their surroundings.

In order to respond to this problem effectively, a structured analysis is needed. The students who harass are usually a small group, which consists of different social actors. But it is not easy to define the boundaries between the various actors, and different people observing what is happening draw different conclusions based on their own, often intuitive set of values.

Students who participate in the harassment of others can be divided into different sub groups, which each has its own particular characteristics and demand its own particular actions from the school. It is easy to see the harassers, the oppressors or the intolerant as one homogenous group consisting of people acting irrationally. But the group is actually very differentiated and is motivated by a number of different rational behaviors or logical considerations and driving forces. Yet it is possible to understand all these different driving forces. This becomes the starting point in a needs analysis, which shall result in an effective way to respond to this type of social problem.

In this text, the different steps in responding to social unrest and intolerance at school will be presented in an easily accessible way. The detailed content in this working process is based on a local analysis.

### **Description of the Student Groups – The Picture of a Cluster of Grapes**

The destructive students and youth are a part of an equally destructive structure, which will here be referred to as *the structure*. This structure could be likened to a cluster of grapes. We use this cluster of grapes as a metaphor to illustrate the different parts of the analysis.

The cluster of grapes consists of many distinct grapes held together by the same stem – social unrest. Similarly, different groups of students are connected to the destructive structure. But each one is connected in its own way, with its own motives and needs satisfaction. For each group there are specific rules of behavior and rational ways of acting. The actions and the motives behind them almost always vary from group to group. This is why the structure might be seen as irrational and contradictory. Viewed from the outside, it incorrectly appears as though all the actors in the structure are just one single mass.

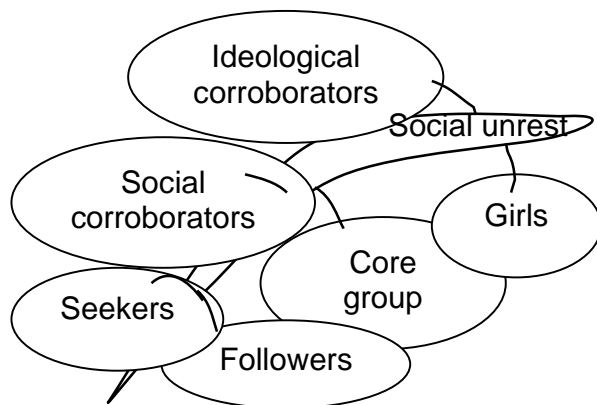


Figure 1. The Parts of the Cluster of Grapes

The different groups of students are thus tied to the social unrest and to a structure of a strongly deteriorating nature. The relationship between the students, and between students and school staff, is here characterized by uncomfortable interactions lacking in confidence and understanding. It is not uncommon that this lack of ability to communicate ends in open conflict. This leads to a strong sense of threat pervading the daily life of the school.

### Communication at School

Good communication at school is based on equality, truthfulness and understanding between those involved. When those qualifications are in place, communication meets three fundamental needs:

- 1) *Psychological* – which provides identity, affirmation and a sense of safety to all involved
- 2) **Relationship defining** – which denotes belonging and status for those involved
- 3) **Socializing** – which facilitates adjustment and the transfer of traditions and knowledge

We easily understand that a bad communication situation at school destroys the necessary needs satisfaction. When communication does not work between teachers and students or between the students themselves, the result is often insecurity, destructive groups obtaining higher status, and a transfer of destructive traditions taking place at the school. This results in social unrest with strong negative consequences.

### The Core Group

At the center of the school social unrest is a core group. It consists of a few students who with or without good reason are perceived as leaders. It is not always a given that these students take on a leading role, because it is not their ability to lead which determines whether or not they will be in the core group. Characteristic for the core group is that it is here that you will find the ideological ringleaders. Here we find the student who strongly identifies with the group's general ideology and who, to the world around, clearly looks like someone who has taken an active and firm position.

An additional determining characteristic of this group is the degree of activism. The core group members are very active, though usually in different ways. This activism varies from acquiring outside resources for the structure, such as movies, music and printed matter, to organizing and developing suitable activities. Because the members of the core group personally identify themselves with the general idea of the group, they gain honor by the collective success of the group. When the group is successful, it is thus the core member who is rewarded through his and her increase in social status. In addition, the core member is the one who has the most to lose by setbacks or by the total dissolution of the group.

When a student leaves the structure, it causes a loss of prestige, giving the core group diminished social status. Therefore, there are extremely few ideological reasons for the core group to abandon the established structure, causing loss of social status. Educational efforts in the form of, for example, ideological enlightenment aimed directly at the core group, are therefore useless and in worst case scenario might even strengthen the core group!

Due to the core group's strong dependency on the structure, the members are alert to actions aimed at other core members. The core group knows that they are always watched by the school staff. Collective efforts by the school aimed at the core group are rarely effective. Instead, they are directly and powerfully counterproductive and will lead to increased social status and influence of the core group.

### **The Followers**

In close proximity to the core group are the followers. Followers are students who share the core group's ideological message. But as a group, followers do not develop their own ideological activities. Followers are therefore not easy to separate from the core group when you watch the structure at a glance. Significant for a follower is his inability and/or lack of interest in influencing the structure in any particular direction. The followers are not as strongly attached to the structure as the core group, and rarely identify themselves as completely socially connected to it. But among the followers we find the future member of the core group.

When carefully analyzing how the structure develops it is entirely possible to distinguish future core group members in advance. The potential core group members are characterized by their beginning to develop ideological activities, which becomes evident by their increased status in the structure and in their own group. In other words, there is a clear social relationship between the core group and the followers.

### **Different Actors in the Sphere Between the Core Group and the Followers**

The students in the core and among the followers can be divided into perpetrators and bystanders. If violence is a part of the structure you can be rather certain that it originates in both groups. This is true regardless of whether the structure is violent toward others, or others are violent toward them. In this case what is referred to is the physical or emotional violence inflicted by the structure on its victims. Victims in this case are

people who exist entirely outside the structure, and they consist of individuals against whom the structure turns its ideological hatred.

It is not necessarily true that the core consists of perpetrators, and the followers of bystanders. It is also not necessarily true that a perpetrator is always a perpetrator and a bystander always a bystander! Usually the disorderly student who acts out is viewed as a perpetrator by his surroundings. But when the same student adopts a role of strong restraint and self-discipline, he is often portrayed as a bystander even when he caused the situation. We must therefore carefully determine who the real perpetrators are, that is, who plans and/or executes, and who stands on the sidelines and takes on the role of audience? In order to nuance this range we may use the concepts:

- Perpetrators
- Collaborators
- Sympathizers
- Bystanders

The intention with this division is to eventually, on a more specific individual level, define the exact nature of the problem. It is for example common for a follower, who often starts a fight on his own, to be viewed as an acute problem by the school staff. The troublemaker quickly becomes the target for actions, while the quiet core group member who quietly works on insidious propaganda may continue his work.

#### *Perpetrators*

Perpetrators are those who plan and/or execute actions which affect one or more victims. A perpetrator can never make the excuse, "I didn't do it," if it is obvious that he or she has worked toward the realization of the plan, even if he does not physically participate in the action. The perpetrator may also not use the excuse, "It wasn't my idea," if he or she obviously executed the plan.

#### *Collaborators*

A collaborator is a student who does not initiate action, but helps when the initiative has been taken. This regardless of whether it was a planned action or a spontaneous situation. The collaborator is active in his or her support for the perpetrator.

#### *Sympathizers*

A sympathizer is a student who is passive in his or her support for the perpetrator. This means that the sympathizer does not take his own initiative, and does not automatically give active support to the perpetrator. The sympathizer does not give support to the perpetrator unless he or she has in some way been encouraged to do so.

#### *Bystanders*

The bystander is a student who does not participate in the action at all, and does not actually even have to sympathize with it. Characteristic for the bystander is that he or she

is aware of what is happening or what is about to happen, but fails to inform someone who can step in and help the victim.

### **Ideological Corroborators**

The ideological corroborators have no or very limited social exchange with the core group. They are often aware of the social alienation of the core group and its low status in society as a whole, while at the same time they are aware of its high status in the structure of the school. Yet, corroborators share values and ideas with the core. This does not necessarily mean that their argumentation sounds the same as that of the core group, on the contrary, they are often considerably more nuanced, and concerned not to appear fanatical. On the one hand, they can therefore directly distance themselves from the members of the core group, but on the other, they might simultaneously defend their opinions.

This group does not have its own social structure with a line of communication to other groups within the structure. The ideological corroborators also do not view themselves as a group which, in a social context, they are not. After all, the actions of the corroborators are often spontaneous and individual, and only those who carefully analyze the structure can trace any kind of systematics to the actions of the group. But the group fills an important function in that it primarily gives the core group a sense of success. Keep in mind that the structure of social unrest has a low status in society at large, something of which the different groups are of course aware. Because of this it is important that they get support from groups that are not quite as marginalized as the core group often is.

### **Social Corroborators**

This group of students is rather uninterested in the ideas surrounding the core group. It does not mean that they are not aware, rather that they don't care about the core group's ideological content. This indifference is also aimed at society's efforts in trying to alleviate the social unrest that the structure causes at school.

In contrast to the previous group, we here find very clear social connections within as well as between the group and the core group and the followers. The social corroborators want to associate themselves with the core and the followers, despite the ideological content. In other words, they want to establish a friendship where ideology plays no role. When the school confronts the social corroborators individually, they often convey ideological opinions that are very different from those of the core group. The opinions so differ that the core group would not accept them. When the social corroborators intuitively or actively become conscious of this, they stop offering up any opinions at all.

For the person who looks at the structure superficially it is easy to miss this group entirely. The school staff usually does not remember seeing the members of this group repeatedly associating with the core group. They also occasionally justify their presence. This is a big mistake, since this group fills a very important function.

The ideological corroborators can be described as giving the core and the followers a social legitimacy, as the core's ideas are represented among the ideological corroborators.

But apparently the core group is not a social part of the activities of the ideological corroborators. At the same time the social corroborators provide an ideological legitimacy for the core and the followers who, because of them, are socially accepted by students essentially uninterested in their ideas. In other words, the students' ideas do not always have to be seen as an expression for social alienation.

### **Girls**

As individuals, girls may of course be a part of any group in the structure. But they also make up a special group with its own rational behaviors and functions. The group girls can be seen as something between followers and social corroborators, but with an entirely different influence on the structure. The students in this group are girlfriends or potential girlfriends, primarily of the boys in the core, and the followers. As girlfriends they may be in strong agreement with the ideas of the structure, or entirely disinterested in them. The essential thing is that they are close to the boys. Their function is to create a social legitimacy for the entire structure and therefore, on the surface, make it appear normal.

For students in their early teens it is of great importance to interact with the opposite sex, and activities which involve one gender only can not claim to be a lifestyle shaping movement but rather just another leisure activity. Due to the presence of the girls, everybody within the structure will want to invest more time in it. This is especially true for a boy who starts going out with one of the girls. Though the opposite is true as well; the degree of participation quickly diminishes if you don't start going out with one of the girls, or start going out with a girl outside the structure, unless it concerns one of the very convinced core group members.

### **Seekers**

Seekers are a nomadic group of students that does not build formal relationships with the other groups in the structure and are students who can belong to any of the groups, which consist of the core, the followers, the corroborators and the girls. Characterizing for nomadic behavior is that they opportunistically seek out actions. You can not say that they are only individuals with a weak sense of self and low self-esteem, even if this is very common. For the superficial onlooker it is entirely impossible to discover the seekers. Usually you don't discover them even when you analyze the structure, but only when the school actively begins its work of trying to disassemble it.

A seeker may for example on one occasion appear to be the most convincing and driving core group Nazi only to, as the school begins working on the structure, leave everything in order to become a member of some anti-racist organization! It is more common, of course, for the seeker to have a somewhat unobtrusive role in the structure, if never entirely passive, to later becoming a part of an entirely different grouping. The need to be a part is more important than what you are a part of. So to this group, the format of the group activities is more important than its content. In a successful school effort you will probably find that several of the former members of the structure were actually seekers, who through outside influence were given the option to reconstruct their social relations for the better.

## **The Working Process – Plucking Grapes from the Cluster**

The core group is at the center of the social unrest. But it is impossible to quickly pluck away this defective grape from the cluster without hurting the other grapes. Therefore the grapes in the cluster must be picked from the outside and in, so that the core group is left for last. The ethical goal must then be for every student and every grape to come out of the process as intact as possible. The Kungsälv Model shows the good probability that students can boost their self-esteem and self-knowledge and create positive and rewarding social relations in healthy environments. In order for the student to come out of this reconstruction work intact, the mapping of the target groups must be thorough. The principles of the working process are to emphasize and develop each student's innate competence.

### **Analysis and Identification**

The first step in the analysis is to identify the nature of the problem and to determine who owns the problem. The students in the destructive structure view life at school entirely differently than does the staff, of course. But the key to solving the problems lies exactly with understanding how the structure views life.

Initially, we often make the mistake of focusing on the problems of the victims of this destructive structure, instead of the structure's own problems. Here we will only mention that there are victims, and that this is our big problem. This is why we immediately must determine the problem of the structure. Without this basic analysis we will never be able to understand how the structure chooses its victims. And we will not be able to identify and understand the driving forces in this destructive structure. It is for example easy to observe that Neo-Nazis dislike immigrants more than do people hostile toward immigrants in general. But to understand what is behind this intensity of the Neo-Nazi activities is much more difficult.

When we have finished the first analysis we look for answers to the following questions:

- What does the ideological core of the structure look like? Is it obvious? To whom is it obvious?
- How rational, in terms of its own ideology, is the structure when it chooses its victims? There is of course no question here whether or not we believe that their ideology is rational, but whether they themselves use it in a rational manner.

When we have defined the ideology of the structure, it is important to determine who belongs to it, as well as their function in the context. The identification happens step by step and on three different levels:

- Ideological definition of core group and followers
- Social definition of social corroborators, girls and thereafter, seekers
- Ideological definition of ideological corroborators

From the analysis of the structure you may, with the help of the ideology, define the most important activists, who can then be sorted into core group members or followers. When this has been done we must consider who operates around this group, in one capacity or another.

### **To Disassemble and Rebuild**

When analysis and identification have been completed the actual work can begin. The goal with this work is to get rid of social unrest and, in the long run, to eliminate intolerance. The structure where the unrest originates has to be destroyed or split, but the split is not enough in itself. In addition to the split you must work toward establishing new, positive and social relationships. The work demands a high degree of adult participation as well as the presence and participation of youth with no social burdens, but with high social status and a good sense of empathy. The work can thus be divided into three main parts:

- Splitting activities
- Focus on the future
- Resocializing activities

### **Splitting Activities**

The splitting activities aim to create distance between the core group and the followers, as well as between these groups and other groups. The school's activities are mostly aimed at individuals who have not invested their social prestige in the unrest but exist around it and around the groups that have. This can cause the core group to be isolated from the group of followers. When we create this division we take away the attention necessary for those whose social prestige is very important.

The activities that the school offers are of course not secret or mystifying in any way, but are owned collectively by all at the school. On the other hand, the school alone owns the strategy for the work for change. The students in the structure who choose to sign up for some of the school's offers, and are chosen to be a part of the activity, see it as a normal activity you discuss openly. Selection is done by the school staff among all interested students. The criteria for the selections are based on a collected needs analysis. Each activity and offer consists of a regular educational activity. What is unusual is the coordination between the different actors' behavior in the structure with the educational effort. The optimal time for this effort is therefore jointly decided at the school after a thorough analysis of the development.

The splitting activities can be implemented on an individual as well as on a collective basis. The appropriate form of the splitting activities can be concluded from the results of the introductory analysis and the problem formulation.

### *Splitting Through Information*

Social unrest gets a foothold in a school only when parents of the youth concerned have become passive for some reason. We are working with the hypothesis that there are three reasons for parents' passivity:



- Not enough knowledge of their child's social circumstances
- Avoidance of what knowledge they do have about their child's social circumstances
- Inability to handle their child's social circumstances

Cooperation between school and parents is based on dialogue where parents must become aware of the way the individual child is acting. It is too late to hold general conversations with the parents in question when the situation has developed into an acute problem. These conversations shall begin early and preferably build on an established and accepted school routine.

In the continuous dialogue, the parents receive detailed information about what has been observed and what can be expected. The accuracy of the information is of such vital importance that it would preferably be given also in writing. Common rules should be established around:

- Who transfers information?
- On what occasion shall information be given?
- In which order and how shall information be given?
- Of what shall the information consist?

Through accuracy in content and distribution of information we lessen the risk for misunderstandings.

The first two reasons for parents' passivity can largely be overcome with the help of focused and clear information. In order to reach maximum effect, it may be necessary to repeat the information and allow different actors in the school and the community to inform and carry on a dialogue with the parents regarding the importance of the information. The principal could initiate the first contact, then follow up with new communication. If this does not lead to change, or if the negative behavior returns, staff from the social services can contact the family. This can be done without opening a file. The content of the communication shall deal with the danger of the continued negative social development of the student. Under certain circumstances it may even be appropriate to allow the police to do a similar intervention.

For the group of parents unable to handle their child's situation, it can be difficult to accomplish change through information. But of course, no matter what, they should be given information, though we need to be careful how we deliver it.

#### *Splitting Through Individual Activities*

Individual attention must be given those students who are affected by or are causing the social unrest in the school. It is here important to find activities where these students can have individual adult contact, which may occur, for example on field trips to different work environments or high schools. A communication channel to adults can also be

created by allowing students to work on individual projects at school. Adult interaction should be characterized by the following:

- Longevity, in order for the student to be able to plan on getting to know an adult in his or her professional role
- The adult contact as a moral role model, so that the student can identify with or relate his or her own thoughts and activities to the grownup
- A knowledge content relevant to the individual student's personal development

This means that the school must build up a qualified network of adults with life experiences and a desire to take social responsibility. This, of course, takes time, but each functional adult contact is a fruitful investment in the future of the student, as well as in the school and the community.

### **Focus on the Future**

Everybody at the school strives toward safe relationships and a harmonious individual identity. An important part of creating safe relationships is to systematically lay the groundwork for a positive view of the future. For this, among other things, a strong sense of purpose and of finding your role in a social context is needed. It is simply about the student envisioning his or her place in a future community. In order to make this possible the school has to offer educational counseling to the individual student as well as opportunities for field trips. Experiences from work sites then become an integral part of a positive focus on the future for the students in question.

The individual student educational counseling is of central importance for rebuilding a socially positive structure, which promotes student learning. The student must be provided with the opportunity to, in tandem with the improvement in learning, develop self-awareness. The possibility of being able to, in a positive manner, identify with social life at school and the education offered there would be one such opportunity. The result of the individual student counseling would also be for the student to acquire positive and realistic expectations on their continued studies and future work experiences.

Field trips can be seen as a part of the individual student counseling. Through learning more about working life, the student improves his or her ability to evaluate different study choices. The personal responsibility for continued studies until a job is acquired, is thus emphasized.

### **Resocializing Activities**

Working life and leisure time make up the natural frame for a harmonious life as a member of society. It is therefore important for the school to offer paths to a rich leisure time with the opportunity of social responsibility training. This becomes the basis for the student's developing a social competence. A determining factor in each student's social competence is the ability to express, understand and take responsibility for their feelings – emotional competence. Without this competence the likelihood of the student finding activities where they can make friends is diminished.

The importance of meaningful leisure time can not be emphasized enough. Satisfying leisure time comes with effects such as increased self-sufficiency and social ability, increased self-esteem, and the development of positive networks and friendships. In order to also acquire better health, it is vital for the activities to provide regular opportunities for experiences of a physical, psychological and social nature.

### *Emotional Competence*

The students' emotional competence is developed in a number of ways in the daily routine work of the school. Several subjects naturally contain elements of emotional competence, and at times unscheduled activities take place in the form of theme based work. Some schools might also have a particular subject such as life skills on the schedule. Regardless of how the local school is organized, ordinary activities must be used to emphasize and complement this work with emotional competence for this group of students. This work should teach the students how to gain the ability to form constructive relationships with other people. The point of departure is self-awareness in order to control your own emotions.

The result of this work is competence in solving day to day conflicts and problem situations. The working process is built on three interactive parts:

#### *To See and Identify*

- Own and others' feelings, when they happen and what expressions they take
- To develop empathy and understand your own role in relation to others' emotional life

#### *To Take Responsibility*

- For own communications about emotional life
- For consequences of own actions and the choice of new behavioral patterns

#### *To Communicate*

- Emotions with words and gestures, facial expressions and movement, or to consciously choose not to do so
- In order to handle own and others' loaded emotions in different situations

### **In Conclusion**

The work with breaking down destructive social student structures at school is based on an initial local analysis. The actors of the structure are identified as well as their relationship to each other. When the school staff agrees on a common and overarching problem formulation, a working process begins, leading to the disassembly of the destructive structure of students creating social unrest and intolerance.

Disassembling will happen by offering education, like particular courses, field trips and work site visits. Participation in educational offerings is on a voluntary basis, and no student can for example be forced to take a particular path of education. Instead the educational work is focused on motivating the students in question to choosing studies adjusted to their particular circumstances. In tandem with the studies, a positive social

structure is created together with the student, where the student gets to develop his or her social ability to relate to others in a tolerant manner. This may for example include learning to take responsibility from good adult role models.

This working process is based on long-term thinking and joint efforts from the entire school staff. The educational efforts, which are aimed at each respective group of students in the negative social structure must, in their didactic content, be understood as a part of the school's regular educational work. In short, this means that education in general is always marked by positive student activity with the acceptance of social responsibility and with dialogue at the center. The educational content in the dialogue should be relatable to the student's life. Otherwise this education easily becomes the static fulfilling of responsibilities and not the basis for authentic experiences which illuminate the indispensable value of tolerance.

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