

# **Violence at school: a challenge for Educational Psychologists. Beyond focus on individual towards socio-cultural perspective.**

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Cita:

Erausquin C. (2010). *Violence at school: a challenge for Educational Psychologists. Beyond focus on individual towards socio-cultural perspective. 27th International Congress of Applied Psychology. International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), Melbourne, Australia.*

Dirección estable: <https://www.aacademica.org/cristina.erausquin/882>

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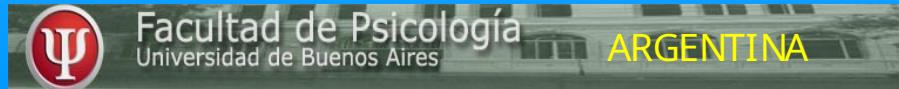
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# Violence at school: a challenge for Educational Psychologists

Beyond focus on individual,  
towards socio-cultural perspective

Prof. Mgter. Cristina Erazquin



## Roadmap

- Aims
- Conceptual Framework
- Categories and links
- Methodological strategies
- Unit of Analysis
- Data analysis and findings
- Emergency, critical knots and links
- Conclusions

## Aims

1. To analyze mental models of activity (MMA) displayed by Psychologists through *narrations* about their practice facing *problems of violence at school*.
2. To identify strengths, tensions and critical knots in MMA at Professional Psychologists development in educational contexts.
3. To explore the articulation of MMA with Activity-Systems (AS) that shape the context of psycho-educational problem construction and of personal and social intervention facing violence problems.

## Conceptual framework

"Units of analysis" and "zone of proximal development" – L. Vigotsky.

"Zone of social construction/appropriation of knowledge"- Newman D., Griffin P., Cole M., Lab of Comparative Human Cognition

"Contextualist shift" in learning conceptions – P. Pintrich, R. Baquero -

"Activity Theory" Third generation- Exchange, Historicity and Multi-voicedness, Conflicts in "Expansive learning". - Y. Engestrom.

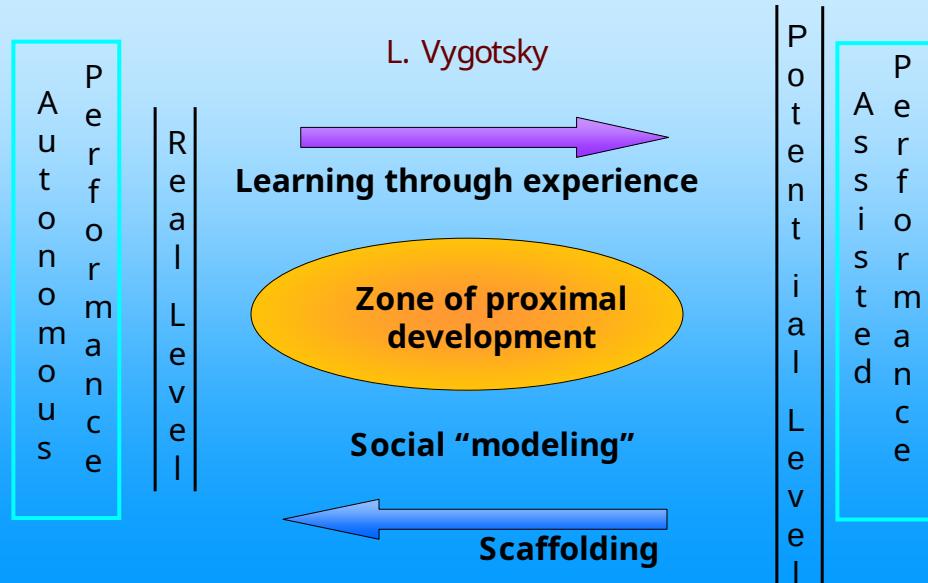
"Mental models" - Cognitive Change in Educational Contexts. Shared mental models. From Implicit to explicit, from simple to complex and from realism to perspectivism: Episodic constructivism - M.J. Rodrigo.

"Reflection into, on and for practice, reflection of reflection in practice" - D. Schon.

"Apprenticeship" – institutional -, "Guided participation" - interpersonal - and "Participative appropriation" - personal – planes of "events"; "Communities of practice" - B. Rogoff, J. Lave & E. Wenger.

"Mediated action and artifacts", tension between agent and tools – J. Wertsch.

## Development of psychologists' competences



## Categories and links

- MMS are related to **purposes**, representations and aims of psycho-educational agents and with their **bonds** to teachers, pupils, managers and parents;
- MMS are related to the **meanings** and the **sense** they have built and reciprocally **appropriate** each other; they **negotiate** meanings with social actors of community;
- Using and changing **cultural artifacts of mediation**, tools available in sociocultural stage, they may build a **share mental model** ;
- Throughout the process of **internalization and externalization** that AS continuously display (Engestrom, 2001), contradictions, **tensions** and conflicts sometimes shape opportunities for the system **to change** and sometimes remain in the **reproduction** of the system.

## Methodology

Descriptive and exploratory study with qualitative and quantitative analysis:

- Questionnaires about Situation-Problems of Violence in Professional Intervention at Educational Contexts (Erausquin, 2009)  
[60 Educational Psychologists and Teachers of Psychology from numerous different schools, belonging to two main cities of Argentine – Buenos Aires and La Plata.  
At the beginning of two specific Postgraduate Courses]
- Narrative writing introduces beliefs and knowledge as a personal experience crossed by culture and history and highlights narrator subjectivity as much as the situation in which he/she is embedded.
- Data were analyzed with Multidimensional Matrix for Psychologists becoming Professionals (Erausquin, Basualdo, 2005) adapted for exploring the perspectives on “violence problems”.

## Unit of Analysis

It is defined for understanding information offered by narrations:

“Mental models of Psychologists for professional intervention on problems of violence situated in educational contexts”

It is composed by 4 Dimensions:

- I) Situation-problem in context of Psychologist Activity,
- II) Intervention/Action of Psychologist,
- III) Tools used in Psychologist Activity,
- IV) Results of Psychologist Activity and Attribution of Causes.

## Dimensions and Axes chosen for this work

1. Dimension I: situation-problem
  1. Axis 1: from the simple to the complex in the problem (indicators 1 to 5)
  2. Axis 6: from realism to perspectivism (indicators 1 to 5)
2. Dimension II: professional psychologist intervention
  1. Axis 3: one or more agent in intervention (indicators 1 to 5)
3. Dimension III: tools used by professional psychologist
  1. Axis 2...consistence and specificity of tools and devices
4. Dimension IV: results of professional intervention and attribution of causes of success or failure
  1. Axis 1. results and attribution to one or more conditions (indicators 1 to 5)

## Findings: strengths concerning to “contextualist shift” in Situation-Problems

### Dimension I: situation-problem

- Axis 1 - From the simple to the complex:  
47,2 % of narrations state a complex problem articulated in its different dimensions, factors and bonds (indicator 4) and 44,4%, also, include in problem analysis inter-subjective and psycho-social networks beyond the school (indicator 5)
- Axis 6 - From the realism to the perspectivism:  
61,1% of narrations show perspectivism through their des-centering from a unique version and vision of the objects (indicator 4)

## Findings: critical knots concerning to “contextualist shift” in Professional Intervention

### Dimension II: professional psychologist intervention

- Axis 3 - One or different agents and agencies in the activity:  
19,4 % of narrations present the lonely activity of psycho-educational agent (indicator 3); 50% present the psychologist activity and the others actions without joint construction of the problem or the intervention (indicator 4).

Obstacles and barriers for inter-agency and for inter-disciplinary articulation with joint construction of problems and interventions are related to:

1. the context where violence situations are developed, and
2. to the historic difficulties for building things with others and among everybody.

## Emergency

Scenes of urgency happened in narrations: violence, situated either in pupils, professionals or institutions, with the generalized shape of the humiliation of the weak.

The scenes overflow the mental frame of professional agents who frequently react with the pressure of an immediate demand, without programming or previous analyzing, without searching the background of the problem and without the time or the space for joint decision, joint activity or reaching a consensus about actions. It may be related to the pain and damage that agents tried to prevent in the victims, but that is an obstacle that prevents working out and balance analysis of action and problems.

## Links and critical knots

Critical knots and conceptual barriers seem to be linked with the **urgency of acting** and with the **dominant explanation models** in Social Representations and Academic Modeling of Psychologists minds.

Models with a clinical focus, **reducing the problems to individual unit of analysis**, are overflowed by **conflict situations in interpersonal and institutional dynamic** at schools.

The psycho-educational agent lacks conceptual frames for explaining those problems and/or supporting the use of tools.

## Conclusions 1

Working with situation-problems is a useful tool in **expansive learning** (Engestrom) that constructs **contexts of practice, discovering and criticizing** with the participation of the social actors

Analysis, working out the experience, and reflection on the practice through supervision and modeling develop networks and zones of social building of meanings:

**a significant challenge to Educational Psychology!**

The Questionnaire becomes an **Instrument of Reflection on the Practice with Violence Situation Problems.**

## Conclusions 2

This work points out the reframing of:

- the relationship between **violence and inclusive education**;
- the importance of “emotional holding” in teachers and pupils environments;
- the social justice and equality worth for exchanging experiences and knowledge;
- the problem of educating a diversity of people with one method, one direction, one rhythm and the same goals for everybody;
- the way psychologists can collaborate with teachers in inclusive solutions for behavior-and-learning problems;
- the former role of Educational Psychologists, linked with assessment of special educational needs (SEN) children by using IQ tests;
- the “splitting” between cognition and emotion, learning and life, since the origins of modern Psychology.

We learn to work working, although we don't know at the beginning how to do it. (Vygotsky, 1924)

Who learn have a chance to build how to do something with others. While they find out how their role can be, they follow one of many ways, *including one that there isn't yet there, one that they have to learn while they are constructing it*. (Engestrom, 1991)

Thank you!

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