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DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR AND VIOLENCE IN LUXEMBOURG SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Based on national reviews and current systematic research the present paper analyses the frequency and evolution of deviant—especially violent—behaviour in Luxembourg schools. Findings are presented in terms of how the students and teachers perceive the respective situation themselves. The empirical results for Luxembourg give an account of the incidence rates of different forms of deviant behaviour and violence in comparison with other (European) countries. In addition, specific methods of prevention and reduction of deviant and violent behaviour that have recently been used and evaluated in Luxembourg will be presented. The report closes with a preview of future developments and recommendations.

KEYWORDS:

Deviant behaviour, violence, school, Luxembourg.

INTRODUCTION

The following report describes the current situation in Luxembourg concerning the frequency of deviant behaviour in Luxembourg schools with a special emphasis on violent behaviour.

The report does not provide a description of the society, the school system in Luxembourg and the historical developments of the phenomena. This information is presented elsewhere (see Steffgen & Russon, 2003; Michaelis & Fischer, 2008). To date, though, no comprehensive research reviews and studies have been conducted on deviant behaviour in Luxembourg. But in the last decade the topic "violence in schools" has gained public as well as scientific interest. Hence, some reviews have been published on the situation in Luxembourg (Otten & Wirtgen, 2001; Steffgen, 2006). Steffgen and Russon (2003), as part of the European Connect-project 'Tackling violence in school', as well as Steffgen and Ewen (2004), documented the current research—partly in comparison with the findings in other member countries of the European Union. Following an order of the 'Ministère de la Culture, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche' the 'Cellule de Recherche sur la Résolution de Conflits' (2003) has also presented an experts report on violence in Luxembourg schools. Extensive measures for the prevention and reduction of violence in schools have been suggested on the basis of both a qualitative-quantitative study and an analysis by experts. These methods were recommended for implementation by the schools themselves.

Based on these reviews and current systematic research the present paper analyses the frequency and evolution of deviant—especially violent—behaviour in Luxembourg. Findings are presented of how the students and teachers perceive the respective situation themselves. The empirical results for Luxembourg give an account of the incidence rates of different forms of deviant behaviour and violence in comparison with other (European) countries. In addition, specific methods of prevention and reduction of deviant and violent behaviour that have recently been used and evaluated in Luxembourg will be presented. The report closes with a preview of future developments of the subject.

HOW TO DEFINE DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR AND VIOLENCE IN SCHOOL? DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

What is deviant behaviour? Clinard and Meier (2007) provide different definitions, which are based on statistical, absolutist, reactivist, or normative accounts. A statistical definition identifies deviance as any behaviour that is statistically infrequent. In the perspective of absolutist definitions, deviant behaviour constitutes a violation of principles and values that are assumed to be universal. A reactivist definition regards a deviant act as the transgression of a specific prohibition, be that formal or informal. Finally, a normative definition tautologically describes deviance as a violation of a norm, namely of a standard conduct to which most people feel they have to conform. Therefore, a lot of different deviances among school children can be detected.

In this report, however, the focus will be on behaviours related to criminality such as risk behaviour and violence. Risk behaviour can be defined as behavioral patterns (i.e., alcohol consumption like the amount in drinks per week; binge drinking) that are correlated with adverse social, psychological and physical consequences. In particular, alcohol is one of the major risk factors for social and physical harm. Alcohol consumption has strong associations with destructive behaviour and getting into trouble with the police (Perkins, 2002). Also cannabis consumption during adolescence is of concern for legal consequences for users and increased risk of psychosocial difficulties. Population studies among cannabis consumers have identified increased rates of juvenile offending and conduct problems.

Violence (in schools) as a specific form of risk behaviour is defined as a purposeful damage in form of a physiological or psychological action that is directed against the self, other persons (student against student; student against teacher; teacher against teacher or teacher against student), or against objects (vandalism). In contrast, bullying is a specific form of violence marked as the systematic and repeated harassment of weaker persons. Mostly it emerges as a group phenomenon (see Olweus, 1993; Smith et al., 1999; for a more detailed definition of the term school violence, see Steffgen, 2004a). The wilful and repeated harm inflicted through electronic media (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006) is then defined as cyber bullying.

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE PREVALENCE OF RISK BEHAVIOUR AND VIOLENCE IN SCHOOL

What do we know about current risk behaviour and violence of adolescents in Luxembourg? Recently, systematic research by self-report measure has

been done in Luxembourg, especially on the topic of violence in schools, whereas fewer studies have addressed other risk behaviour (Steffgen, 2006; Michaelis & Fischer, 2008).

NATIONAL POLICE CRIME STATISTICS

First and foremost, the annual police crime statistics report the frequency of juvenile delinquency in Luxembourg (see Police Grand-Ducale, 2008). Data about the frequency of burglary, theft, vandalism, forgery, violence against person, immorality, drug delict, violation of entry law and traffic offence are listed here.

Between 2001 and 2006, the juvenile delinquency of adolescents (< 18 years) was stable (between 10.8 and 12.5 %) in Luxembourg. In 2007, however, the rate was 13.3 % of all crime and, thus, higher than the previous years. Unfortunately, international statistics are missing, so comparing Luxembourg with other countries is not possible (Steffgen, 2008).

All in all, official crime statistics fail to reflect the true level of crime and are difficult to interpret. The existence of a hidden (or dark) figure of crime is obvious and caused by several factors (e.g., some victims of crime might fear a reprisal if they go to the police).

NATIONAL EMPIRICAL FINDINGS ABOUT RISK BEHAVIOUR AND SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Empirical studies have been conducted with school children and teachers of primary and secondary schools as well as adolescents in Luxembourg (Steffgen, 2006). The key findings will be presented next.

Findings on school children

Up to now, research on risk behaviour in Luxembourg is sparse. Fischer (2000a, 2000b) reports that alcohol consumption and cannabis use is a problem in Luxembourg. In a local survey 15.9 % of adolescents (between 17 and 25 year old) report that they have been drunk at least five times in their live. 7.2 % of 12 to 16 year old, and 16.5 % of 17 to 25 year old students have consumed cannabis (lifetime prevalence, in 6 district councils). 3.2 % of 12 to 16 year old students and 5.8 % of 17 to 25 year old students consume cannabis on a regular basis. Dickes et al. (1996) found a lifetime prevalence of 4.5 % and a current use prevalence of 2.9 % of cannabis of 13 to 16 year old students (see also Origer, 2007).

In 1999/2000, a representative national survey based on the questionnaire of the study on "Health behaviour among school-aged children" was conducted in Luxembourg schools. Among other topics, primary and

secondary students were asked about risk behaviour, violence, and bullying in school (Wagener & Petry, 2002; Henschen & Wagener, 2005; Wagener, Henschen & Petry, 2005; Petry & Henschen, 2004). 7,397 students from the secondary school level (26.5 % of the student population), and 963 students from the primary school level (10.4 % of the student population), were included in the survey.

55.9 % of students from primary schools (5th and 6th class) and 85.5 % of students from secondary schools report having had a drink in their life. 1.9 % of the primary school children have been drunk at least twice, whereas this is true for 29.8 % of the secondary school students.

11.4 % of the boys and 4.2 % of the girls from primary schools report having consumed drugs. Until the age of 19 drug consumption is reported by more than 50 % of the boys and 40 % of the girls.

19.5 % of the students from primary schools and 14.4 % of the secondary schools indicate that they have being bullied by other students at least 'sometimes, but not every week'. On the other hand, 18.5 % of the students from primary schools and 20 % of the students from secondary schools admitted having bullied other students at least 'sometimes, but not every week'.

All in all, only 9.5 % of secondary school students but 36.7 % of primary school children indicate that they have been hit at least once by other students. In addition, 35.1 % of primary school children and 15.6 % of secondary school students report that they have hit other students at least once.

The gender difference is significant in these statistics. Boys were more likely than girls to become victims or perpetrators. Also, boys consistently bully other children more often than girls. With respect to becoming victims of bullying, however, there is little difference between boys and girls. The results of another representative survey on school violence of primary school children were published by Martin (2004). Violent acts were investigated from different perspectives, including observer, perpetrator, and victim. Data largely support research findings of the level of violent behaviour of Petry and Henschen (2004).

Besides this, a research team around Steffgen (Boever, Letsch, Mathay, Nilles, Schumacher, Speller & Steffgen, 2001; Guillaume, Majerus, Nickels & Steffgen, 2002; Huberty & Steffgen, 2008; Steffgen, 2003, 2004b, 2004c) implemented numerous school specific studies to investigate the extent of school violence and the level of school climate in the respective schools. They found that the violence rates were slightly different between schools, which

indicates that also school characteristics can influence violence rates (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005)

Currently, they are working on the topic of cyber bullying (Steffgen, 2009). In a sample of 2,070 students (45.5 % boys; 54.5 % girls from Luxembourg schools), 4.3 % of the students reported having experienced cyber bullying *often* (almost daily, several times a week, about once a week, about once in a month), 9.8 % only *1-3 times a year*, and 85.8 % *never*. The prevalence rates for cyber bullying other students were 5.0 % *often*, 5.6 % only *1-3 times a year*, and 89.4 % *never*.

In addition, Willems and his colleagues (Boultgen, Heinen & Willems, 2007; Heinen, Boultgen & Willems, 2006; Willems & Meyers, 2008) have shown that drug abuse and violent behaviour rates are also varying between cities and regions in Luxembourg.

Findings on school teachers

Remarkable differences were found between students and adults in the perception of violence in school (CRRC, 2003). Teacher reported about more violence in school than students. In a sample survey with 90 primary school teachers, Steffgen (2000a) examined teachers' awareness of the extent of physical violence and bullying among students. The majority of teachers believed that the incidence of violent behaviour (59 %) and bullying (66.3 %) remained stable over the previous five years. In another study with primary school teachers (n = 158), Steffgen (2001) found evidence that an authoritarian educational method in combination with an outwardly directed anger expression encourages aggressive behaviour of students.

In a representative study with 399 secondary school teachers, Steffgen and Ewen (2007) investigated incidences of violent acts of students directed against teachers. Data from the nationwide survey show that in Luxembourg 23.9% of the teachers are victims of strong verbal attacks by students at least several times a year. Also 9.3% of Luxembourg teachers became victims of object theft, 4.5% of object damage, and 5.8% of telephone terror, respectively. The data suggest that in Luxembourg, 7% of teachers were victims of sexual harassment, whereas only 2% of the respondents admitted similar experiences in the German study by Greszik et al. (1995). The national survey also showed that 4% of teachers were victims of physical assault, which is in agreement with the findings from German studies (Varbelow, 2003; Greszik et al., 1995).

To date, no research on the perception of deviant or risk behaviour by teachers in Luxembourg is available.

INTERNATIONAL EMPIRICAL FINDINGS ON RISK BEHAVIOUR FOR LUXEMBOURG

Scherer (1996) was the first to present an international study on school violence in Luxembourg. In an attempt to analyze the cross-border situation in the greater Saar-Lor-Lux region, 323 students from Luxembourg, 346 from Saarbrücken (Germany), and 315 from Metz (France), derived from 18 different schools, participated in this study. Taking into account a variety of different aspects concerning school violence, school ecological and family related factors, this study demonstrates differences in the extent of school violence between the three cities of the same greater region. In this study, the Luxembourg students showed less physical violence and vandalism than their German and French colleagues.

Henschen and Wagener (2005) separately compared the findings of the national survey of 1999/2000 with findings of the fifth survey of the international Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study. 13 % of the 15 year-old students report never having had a drink. This is one of the highest percentages of the 29 countries participating in this comparison. Furthermore, the Luxembourg school children are less often drunk than students from other countries (sixth last in the ranking of 29 countries of the 11 year old and third last in the ranking of the 13 and 15 year old students; see also section 3.4 below).

In 2006, Luxembourg participated for the first time as official partner in the collaborative cross-national HBSC study. In addition to findings of social context, health outcomes, and health behaviours the international report contains key findings of risk behaviour among young people in 41 countries and regions across Europe and North America (Currie et al., 2008). The international study focuses on children aged 11 (primary school), 13, and 15 years (secondary school). A total of 4,300 Luxembourg adolescents participated in the study.

Currie et al. (2008) show that there are large cross-border differences in the prevalence of alcohol and cannabis consumption, physical fighting, and bullying reports.

Adolescents (girls and boys) from Luxembourg report less alcohol drinking but more cannabis consumption than the average of the other 40 HBSC-countries (see table 1).

They are also less often involved in physical fights. With respect to bullying especially girls report been bullied more often than the HBSC average. 11-year old boys indicate less and 15-year old boys report more bullying compared to the average in other countries (see table 1).

		11 year old		13 year old		15 year old	
		girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys
Drink alcohol at least once a week	LUX	2 %	4 %	6 %	9 %	19 %	30 %
	HBSC	3 %	7 %	9 %	13%	21 %	31 %
Have been drunk at least twice	LUX	1 %	2 %	5 %	6 %	20 %	27 %
	HBSC	2 %	4 %	9 %	13%	30 %	37 %
Ever consumed cannabis in their lifetime	LUX					21 %	25 %
	HBSC					16 %	21 %
Consumed cannabis in the last 30 days	LUX					7 %	13 %
	HBSC					6 %	8 %
Involved in a physical fight at least three times in the last 12 month	LUX	5 %	20 %	6 %	18 %	7 %	16 %
	HBSC	7 %	25 %	7 %	21 %	6 %	17 %
Been bullied at school at least twice in the past couple of months	LUX	16 %	15 %	13 %	16 %	12 %	11 %
	HBSC	13 %	16 %	13 %	15 %	8 %	11 %
Have bullied others at school at least twice in the past couple of months	LUX	7 %	8 %	9 %	16 %	10 %	24 %
	HBSC	6 %	12 %	9 %	15%	7 %	16 %

Table 1: Comparison between Luxembourg (LUX) and HBSC average about risk behaviour

IS RISK BEHAVIOUR AND SCHOOL VIOLENCE ON THE INCREASE?

As yet, empirical studies are missing that serve as a scientific estimation about whether the level of risk behaviour and violence of Luxembourg students has increased or decreased in the past years (Steffgen, 2000b, 2006). Longitudinal studies are required, in which the development of risk behaviour and violence in schools is observed and investigated (Steffgen & Ewen, 2004).

However, alcohol consumption may be compared between findings of the 1999/2000 survey (Henschen, Wagener & Petry, 2005) and the official 2005/2006 HBSC survey (Currie et al., 2008). Findings show that in 2006 a greater number of 15-year old girls (20 %) report to having been drunk at least twice in their life than did 15-year old girls in 1999/2000 (10 %, see table 2). Origer (2007) also concluded that cannabis consumption increased between 1992 to 2000. Comparable data show increasing lifetime prevalence in young people (16-20 years) for all common illicit substances.

		11 year old		13 year old		15 year old	
		girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys
Have been drunk at least twice	2006	1 %	2 %	5 %	6 %	20 %	27 %
	1999/00	1.5 %	2.6 %	3 %	7 %	10 %	26 %

Table 2: Comparison in alcohol consumption between 1999/2000 and 2006

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Studies presented in the previous section substantiate that significant research concerning the prevalence of risk and violent behaviour at Luxembourg schools does exist. Based on these findings a concluding analysis about the extent of different forms of risk behaviour in Luxembourg is possible. The results from the different surveys show that:

- concerning *alcohol consumption* adolescents from Luxembourg show more or less similar levels of consumption as the adolescents in other countries (in comparison to the average). They report being drunk less often, but with an increase of alcohol consumption of 15-year old girls,
- concerning *cannabis use* the 15-years old report to consume cannabis more often than the average of adolescents in other countries,
- concerning *physical violence* slightly lower levels of violent acts have been observed in primary and especially secondary schools in Luxembourg in comparison to other countries,
- concerning *bullying* the situation is different. Luxembourg studies line out that verbal attacks are part of the daily experiences for most students (Steffgen, 2006). Compared to the HBSC average acts of bullying other students are slightly more likely in Luxembourg.

NATIONAL POLICIES AND INITIATIVES TO PREVENT AND REDUCE RISK AND VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR

National prevention activities on risk behaviour that are integral part of national school programmes have mainly resulted from corporate actions of different governmental and non-governmental organizations (Origer, 2007; Steffgen 2006). In Luxembourg, especially the ‘National Prevention Centre on Drug Addiction’ (CePT), as a coordination centre of the ministry of health, is concerned with drug addiction prevention of adolescents (Michaelis & Fischer, 2008). The missions of the centre are elucidation, sensitization, education, and professional training in schools and communities. The CePT

also participated in the European Healthy Schools and Drugs research project funded by the EU (Fischer & Jung, 2006). The main objective of the project was to improve and develop innovative concepts for school based drug prevention. It was aimed at preventing non-users, experimental users, and recreational users from consuming substances in a harmful way. Altogether, the CePT has developed a national strategy and approach for drug addiction prevention, but drug prevention is not mandatory in schools. As yet, however, no clear national guidelines exist, nor has any official anti-violence initiative of the kind conducted in other countries (e.g. Canada and Australia) been implemented in Luxembourg. The educational Ministry especially supports peer-mediation projects in schools to tackle violence (Nilles, 2007), but all in all Luxembourg schools are largely left to their own approaches to handle the problem.

To get an overview of the initiatives and approaches aimed at the prevention or reduction of violence in Luxembourg secondary schools an exploratory study was conducted (Steffgen, Russon, Kieffer & Worré, 2001; for primary school see also Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle, 2007). More precisely, an interview with the headmaster/-mistress of every Luxembourg secondary school was carried out. 33 schools were contacted, of which 28 were involved in this study. The questionnaire provided information on all attempts that had been made so far to prevent or reduce the phenomenon of violence in schools directly (i.e., in direct relation to violence), or indirectly. The findings of this study substantiated that a remarkable number of different interventions have been undertaken in Luxembourg schools to prevent violence without scientifically evaluating the effects and benefits of such actions (Steffgen & Russon, 2003). Currently, numerous scientific evaluations of projects and intervention programs to prevent risk behaviour are under way or have already been carried out:

- *Evaluation of pilot project "Community Based Prevention of Drug Dependency."* Prevention groups consist of voluntary citizens of seven Luxembourg communities to carry out drug addiction prevention activities in their communities. 644 persons were either assigned to a waiting group or a treatment group. They were surveyed twice by means of a questionnaire. The results show that substances and drug behaviours differed in terms of risk perception. Opinions regarding the function of alcohol, nicotine, and illegal drugs were comparatively less positive in the treatment group (Fischer, 2001).
- *Evaluation of project Primalr.* Project Primalr is a program for the prevention of aggressive behaviour and the promotion of prosocial behaviour among pre- and primary school children. Class teachers

received a vocational training course first and then held courses in schools, accompanied by further trainings and supervisions for parents, teachers, and extracurricular educators. The goal of this scientific study was to examine the effects of the child courses. Scientific results show a short to medium term effectiveness of child courses in preschool and grade one (Petermann, Natzke, von Marées & Koglin, 2007)

- *Evaluation of a training program of civil courage in school.* Class teachers of 9 different primary (5th and 6th grade) and secondary (7th grade) schools received a vocational training course for 16 hours which included (a) information about aggression, helping behaviour and different forms to intervene, (b) interchange about educational strategies, and (c) experiences with carrying out examples of students training. The evaluation is currently in progress. Training (33 classes) and control (26 classes) group (students and teacher) are assessed at three time points (pre, post, two month follow; N ~ 1000). Preliminary results of the training evaluation are promising (Pfetsch, Steffgen & Gollwitzer, 2008).
- *Evaluation of Faustlos curriculum.* Faustlos is an adaptation of the American Second Step program for the prevention of aggressive behaviours of elementary school children (Schick & Cierpka, 2005). In Luxembourg, 34 communities of the northern part of the country are participating in this project. The scientific evaluation is currently in progress (Steffgen, in press).

In addition to the direct activities in schools the police force are also providing adolescents in Luxembourg schools with information and awareness raising courses to prevent violence and drug consumption. Likewise, youth centres are developing and managing different projects to prevent and reduce risk and violent behaviour of adolescents (Nilles, Ecker & Dabrowski, 2007).

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

To summarise, the issues of cannabis consumption and psychological violence (bullying) emerges as significant in Luxembourg schools. It seems that more preventive interventions are needed (see report of the CRRC, 2003; Fischer & Jung, 2006; Steffgen, 2006).

What are the specific requirements for the future? Based on the list of recommendations from Debarbieux (2008) the following activities are to be considered for Luxembourg schools:

- The reports show that it is advisable to support further systematic research—especially longitudinal studies—in which the various forms and degrees of risk and violent behaviour should be differentiated and measured thoroughly (Debarbieux, 2006). Future studies and analyses have to address also new forms of risk behaviour (e.g. cyber bullying).
- It is necessary to develop and establish a national strategy to tackle bullying in schools. The report of the CRRC (2003) presents options for school procedures. With regard to this, an adequate school development ('projet d'établissement') as well as intensified training of teachers have been emphasized (see Ewen, 2004; Ewen & Steffgen, 2004).
- More independent (third parties) evaluations of actions are needed to prevent and reduce risk behaviour as well as school violence. Because the success (or failure) of certain approaches is sometimes subject to political interests, it is important to control and avoid the temptations to incorrectly evaluate the effects of certain interventions.

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