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BAPNE as a mediation and conflict resolution tool in education. Methodological introduction

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Abstract

The main objective of this research article is to propose a new model for educational mediation, based on the use of a fourth involved party (the whole group within a classroom) whom, with the use of Bapne methodology through music, rhythm and body percussion, becomes a necessary tool in conflict resolution.

Our aim is to give new mediation-specific tools and strategies to university students of pre-school, primary and secondary education, in order for them to use them when they perform as teachers.

We will look at and analyse why the principal studies and theorists on the topic, such as Sara Cobb, William Ury and Baruch and Folger propose 3 parties, exclusively, for conflict resolution: 2 confronted parties and a mediator. We will then justify our proposal for a fourth party: the group, the community.

The strategy to be carried out is the reiterated practise of BAPNE activities within the classroom and with those parties in conflict in order to generate reengagement, satisfaction, empathy, inclusion work and coexistence with a double aim: to tackle existing conflicts and to prevent those that might arise in the future.

1. Introduction

Current conflict in the classroom arising from lack of discipline, bad manners and lack of respect are increasingly commonplace in education centers worldwide. Educators are constantly seeking new teaching strategies to mitigate said

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inconveniences.

It is fairly common for everyone to listen or get news about physical abuse between students and teachers, emotional blackmail, bullying, fights between same class students which, on extreme levels lead to chronic depression in teachers or suicide in students. It is because of this that the environment in class becomes vile and teachers are at a loss to take their class back to normal teaching climate. Therefore, it is almost mandatory for us now to use conflict resolution strategies that are adapted to the new social and educational context, such as mediation.

1.1. State of the issue.

There is barely anything on paper that relates conflict resolution with music. Even more so, there is no scientific literature that relates conflict resolution through body percussion. It is because of that we see a gap that needs to be filled and that fits perfectly given the many favorable repercussions we observe in users of the BAPNE methodology. Body percussion is much more than a way to exercise our body and make music; it is a fantastic way to work our brain if we work it with choreographies. If we also factor in that BAPNE methodology develops sequenced activities with very specific targets in order to not only produce cognitive stimulation, but also socio-emotional stimulation, we confront the need to study what else happens in the mind of the BAPNE user, their self-esteem and their way to relate to others, how and when this method is appropriate to solve conflict and pprevent them.

1.2. Aim

The aim of this research work is to confront a complex educational reality, filled with conflict situations, using a mediation model based in the practice of a series of activities developed through the BAPNE methodology in the classroom. This is done in order to establish an adequate climate for the approach of confronted parties to mediation, improving their level of empathy and increasing satisfaction and contact levels.

Many education centers use mediation but in order to understand this tool we need to make a conceptual approach to mediation methods, understand what the main proponents of the concept think and, from that standpoint, propose a new model for mediation through the BAPNE methodology from inside the classroom. What we propose is to improve and find a favorable climate for the encounter of parties in conflict by creating socio-emotional effects of satisfaction, group belonging and closeness to others.

2. Method

2.1. Aim of method

The current paper has these main objectives:

1. To provide new tools and strategies for mediation to current and future teachers through the three ways of approach as per Lowen's studies (sight, feet and hands).
2. To analyze why most studies and theorists on mediation spek about only three parties in the mediation process.
3. To propose a new model of educational mediation based on the use of a fourth party (the group within the classroom performing BAPNE methodology activities) justifying the added benefit that 4th party provides.
4. To explain and illustrate the strategy to perform that mediation model, which BAPNE activities must be performed and why.
5. To understand the double aim of the use of the proposed model, tackling existing conflict as well as prevent those that might break out in the future.

2.2. Method and process of research.

In order to understand the environment that mediation and conflict resolution is articulated on an educational level in BAPNE methodology, we need to establish a theoretical framework on the interest of mediation from different scopes, in order to observe in which effective ways mediation is articulated and why we believe it is necessary to add a fourth party to the mediation process.

What do we understand as mediation in BAPNE methodology? Mediation is a way to channel all the energy both parties are wasting and aim it towards the appropriate goal, which is that of achieving order, joint satisfaction of both parties, agreement and an improvement in the way of relating with each other and with the rest of the group.

2.2.1. Mediation from an ethnographic perspective

Anthropologist William Ury (2005) treats this issue in his work "Getting to Peace" by explaining San people from the Kalahari and the Semai from the Malaysian rainforest. He explains how San tackle problems; the whole tribe, men and women, try to calm the confronted sides, then all of them sit and talk. This open process may last up to several days as the dispute is solved completely by talking. Decisions are taken by agreement in order to satisfy both parties and also the community. Same thing happens with the Himba in Namibia, where a council of elders-sages regulates any conflict. Among the Himba, and as per consensus among the whole tribe, the thieve or the wrongdoer must pay up to six times the damage created. If they stole a goat, they must pay 6 back; but also submit to whole group consensus on satisfactions.

In order to reach this end, all and every member of the community will investigate and find out which rules were broken in order for the conflict to arise and what needs to be done to bring back social harmony. This process is known as "kgotla".

As the group dialogue progresses, there is an increasing agreement on the appropriate solution. If there is ever a threat of violence, the whole community responds with urgency. Some members gather all poisoned arrows to hide them away in the forest. Others try to separate fighting individuals. Then the talking starts. San people will not rest until the dispute finds a complete resolution.

The Semai, Ury says, have the reputation for being the most peaceful culture on Earth and, just as the San, they engage in long community talks known as "bcaraa". When conflict arises, the Semai try not to take sides, even if there are close relatives or friends involved. The appropriate thing to do then is to encourage their loved one to solve their dispute in the most peaceful way possible.

The author insists that in our society there is the background belief that there are only two sides to any conflict (life partners, company owners versus workers, teachers versus students, etc). This is a wrong conceptualization as every conflict arises within a community (relatives, neighbors, friends etc.) which is the third party in any dispute and whose cooperation is needed to recover order, harmony. Without the third party, serious conflict between two parties becomes destructive fight. Third parties bring us from confrontation to cooperation; mediation would then be a fourth party.

2.2.2 Mediation from a psychological scope offers different paths to conflict resolution.

From a psychological standpoint we can understand two parties find conflict when their objectives are not compatible. They continuously try to install a type of order that was lost.

Alzate's take on conflict resolution and mediation

Within the field of educational mediation we find a well-defined classification that articulates conflict in two separate typologies Alzate (1998):

- Interpersonal Conflict: happens between individual persons (teacher and student, student and peer, etc.) and most theory on mediation and negotiation deals with this type of conflict.
- Intra-group conflict: It affects the ability of the group to solve its disputes and keep working on its objectives (within a classroom, the whole institution, etc.)

The same author insists that on a psychological level, conflicts approached by this study imply a perception (actual or not) of unequal interests by parties. They differ on perception of objectives and their means towards them, and can be solved through behavior and attitude change and produce results that range from the most destructive solution to the most constructive one. These conflicts usually arise from differences or competition on: Resources (use of classroom elements…), values, beliefs (offending the weak…), relationship (mutual dependence, abuse, envy…)

Lederach's classification of conflict resolution:

Lederach (1998) proposes a triangular structure of conflict in which three essential components take part: people,

problem and process.

When approaching the people component, we must take into account who is in conflict and their psychological elements such as feelings, emotions, individual perceptions, etc.

In order to facilitate conflict resolution when dealing with this component we need to:

- Promote understanding of emotions facilitating acknowledgement of human needs; listen for as long as its needed so as to show respect; not threaten self esteem; find out how the other's actions have affected this issue and the general situation.

In what regards to Process, Lederach analyzes:

- The dynamics of conflict (how did it start, what other problems were added, influences, how decisions are taken and, specially, how parties at conflict feel about it).
- Communication (who speaks, when, how long, why, rumors, etc).
- In order to help resolution it is necessary to understand balance of power in the relation of parties, or imbalance, and develop a process that all deem fair.

Regarding Problem:

The author states that understanding is eased if we distinguish: issues, interests, needs and positions.

- Issues: different areas where discrepancy or incompatibility are present and that need to be approached in order to solve the problem,
- Interests: potential benefits placed on reaching a particular target, the "why" each of the issues matters to people.
- Needs: the indispensable items, minimum points to satisfy a person with regards to the issue, the psyche and the procedure to solve the problem.
- Positions: this item refers to specific behavior and attitude adopted by parties.

Edward de Bono's contribution to mediation:

De Bono (1985) intends to prove that our thought system is outdated, inadequate and dangerous when treating conflict resolution. This is due to the thought system (based on the logic of language and the principle of contradiction) being a conflictive method in itself. This author states that we must use thought based on language, allowing for three thresholds in order to mitigate the dangerous limitations in this thought system. These thresholds or steps are:

- Comprehension of nature of perception.
- Distancing from dangers of language.
- Introduction of new resources in language. This is the standpoint from which BAPNE methodology bases the introduction of body percussion as a new resource in language.

We base our opinion in the idea that our brain has a complex chemical functioning, diverse nervous impulses with couriers called neuropeptides. These couriers hinder or impede nervous activity in specific places. These chemical bases are what we call emotions, which we all understand that affect people's thought process. It is not that a person might choose thoughts that correspond their emotions in that particular moment, it may actually happen that, in that particular emotional state, the rational subject might simply be incapable of having certain thoughts. It is not a choice.

It is important to note then that the language of dialectic has always been a foundation of thought around conflict. De Bono (1985) states that this dialectic model is wrong and even dangerous and he sums up what happens with this model in conflict resolution:

- Each party becomes increasingly rigid.
- None of the parties takes up any effort to develop a different idea to those in conflict.
- There is an amount of time, energy or money invested in a remote discussion that can be time-extensive.
- Creativity and ingenuity of each party is not aimed to the improvement of their idea, rather, to securing failure of the opposing idea.
- In the end, the strongest idea prevails, which is not necessary the best one.

The principal objection to this method is that creative energy is not aimed at developing better ideas. The fact of losing

or earning points becomes a conflict in itself and not a discussion of the conflict, thus rendering it pointless to solve conflict by creating new conflict. There is no successful acknowledgment of positive aspects of the other party's ideas, which is precisely the role to be performed by the third party, or third side as Ury (2005) calls it.

2.2.3. Most important mediation models and justification for selection of one of them in BAPNE methodology.

There are currently three outstanding models in the field of mediation: the Harvard model (based on agreement); the transformation model (centered on relationships and omitting agreement); and the circular-narrative model (centered on modifying relationships as well as reaching an agreement). These approaches constitute the methodological axis on which mediation is structured and to which many authors have contributed their ideas. Given the limited extension of this research study, we will elaborate on this latter model, due to it being the one used by the BAPNE methodology and possessing an anthropological foundation.

The circular-narrative model was developed by Sara Cobb (University of Santa Barbara, California) and presented in 1995 through a number of articles and courses on negotiation and conflict resolution. Its objective is finding a coexistence order of psychological nature.

Its main characteristics are:

- Consideration of conflict as an actual situation, which is interpreted in a certain way and within a specific context.
- This particular interpretation includes the meanings and narratives of each participant; in this sense, reinterpreting each sphere of meanings and narratives will allow for the conflict to be perceived from a different angle.
- Care for others becomes care for oneself.
- It inherits interest for the interpretation of narratives (specially from Derrida's hermeneutics with his theory of "deconstruction"). Deconstruction is a way of scrutinizing a text, a story; to comprehend something in a different way; to give a new meaning to signs. To deconstruct the old meanings is the fore-step to reconstructing a new, more whole, more comprehensive meaning.

BAPNE methodology, on the basis of said model, aims for cognitive, social-emotional, psychomotor and neural-rehabilitative stimulation through the teaching of body percussion. It is not a musical method, as it does not pursue teaching of music (name of notes, duration, harmony, agogics…) but intends to stimulate attention, concentration and memory at a cognitive level and increase empathy and social relations, among other thing, both with healthy individuals and specially challenged individuals.

Music unites and disperses dependent on its use.

Music can be used to mark territorial limits of two confronting parties, as it is the case with the Maori Haka, but we must not forget that there is curious data as narrated by Romero-Naranjo (2008) in Bolivia. The author states: "in the Macha people in the peaks of the Andes Mountains, villagers rehearse their songs for a festival called "TinKu". They gather together in May to perform an actual music battle. A group from each village confronts their opponent with a dialogue of songs, where each pesters the other with music and dances and, to emphasize this even further, it all ends in physical violence. There are no winners but territorial limits are reaffirmed and they all go their peaceful ways after that."

2.3. Proposed Strategy.

We propose the performance of sequenced BAPNE activities, all of them selected on a psychological and physiologic basis through several research studies performed by BAPNE method proponent. These studies pre-test and post-test different field of study, such as cognitive level tests measuring hormone secretion that affects mental and physical state of individuals, the increase of self-esteem and the decrease of cortisol, which is the main trigger for anxiety for people being part of conflict. We can cite Sociomet, Flow Test, Bulls' Sociogram and Basc Test, among others.

We also propose specific activities in which students position themselves in concentric circles and, following Lowen's proposals, promote the sense of belonging to the group through:

- sight (because I look at you)
- hands (because I touch you)

- feet (because I move in order to interact with another individual, to touch and look anew)

By practicing these activities, cortisol levels, responsible for anxiety, are lowered and oxytocin levels are increased, which are responsible for feelings of individual and group wellbeing, while monitoring the non production of endorphin, given that these lead to euphoria which can bring about unwanted or even violent actions.

3. Conclusions

All activities previously described promote convergence, satisfaction, group belonging, empathy, respect and the positive bond of affection needed to tackle all conflict, as well as improving the means of communicating with others by reducing feelings of rage, impotence and distance with the opposing party.

In BAPNE, we give specific aims to all activities and we check their results through pre- and post-testing with tools such a s :

- Sociomet
- Basc
- Bulls' Sociogram
- Rosenberg

We at BAPNE are well aware of the close relationship between thought and language, word and action, which is why we find it necessary to promote projects where mediation is related to other fields such as body expression as a means to express emotion and opinion.

From a psychological standpoint, what we achieve practicing BAPNE in the environment of a classroom is teamwork, community work that allows and enables the student to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, developing new senses of belonging through sight, hand and feet contact. This entails an improvement in motivation, positive conveyance of values and eradication of conflict-caused stress on the individuals involved as well as on the rest of the members of the community. Ultimately, what we achieve is the development of a sense of community in which no negative conflict finds room, but only different points of view from which to learn in harmony and with the full support of the whole education community.

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