Chapter 8

Bullying in Primary School

Ton Mooij

In 1982, several Norwegian students committed suicide as a result of exposure to bullying over long periods of time. One result of this tragedy was the initiation of a nationwide campaign against bullying and victimisation (Olweus, 1984). Parents, teachers, school officials and individuals involved with national policy in many countries became interested in bullying as a serious form of disruptive behaviours. In several countries, research was carried out to provide more information on bullying and its effects on those being bullied in and around schools (American Psychological Association, 1993; Haselager & Van Lieshout, 1992; Van Lieshout, Haselager & Liebrand, 1992; Olweus, 1987; Roland, 1989; Smith & Sharp, 1994).

In this chapter, I will focus on the bullying of and by Dutch students below age 13. The first questions to be answered are what is ‘bullying’, and how can it be distinguished from other types of disruptive behaviours? The answer to these questions are given by means of conceptual definitions, based on empirical research and the use of precise instrumentation to measure relevant bullying behaviours. Secondly, how common is bullying and being bullied among students aged 4–12 in preschools and primary schools? As in other countries, there is some good information available about bullying in the Netherlands (see Chapter 7, this volume). Usually, research consists of descriptive statistics of bullying and victimisation and their relationships to variables such as other persons, classrooms and schools (for example, Lane, 1989; Stevens, de Bourdeaudhuij & Van Oost, 2000).

Third, what are the characteristics or variables that function either as correlates or as causes of bullying behaviour? Many risk and promotive factors may be relevant and are mentioned in intervention research to reduce bullying (Olweus, 1991, 1993; Sharp & Smith, 1993). The final, and probably most important question, focuses on systemic or sustainable prevention of bullying behaviour. In a review of Dutch youth health-intervention programmes, Hermanns, Öry and Schrijvers (2005) were negative about the available programmes and proposed the implementation of effective programmes from the US that concentrated on at-risk youth. In this chapter, however, I will sketch a somewhat different and more optimistic picture of systemic multilevel prevention in preschool and primary schools in the Netherlands. I will suggest substantive collaboration between educational practitioners and youth health and other community staff to assist parents and children in the effective prevention of bullying.
Concepts of Bullying and Being Bullied

Bullying denotes aggressive behaviour that is characterised by individuals’ wilful and conscious desire to hurt and place another person under stress (Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Tattum, 1993). According to Olweus (1991), students’ bullying refers to saying mean or annoying things to each other; or to beat, kick, threaten, or lock up each other. Bullying typically occurs repeatedly over time, and represents an imbalance of power between the bully (or a group of bullies) and the victim or scapegoat (Allport, 1948). Victimisation refers to the process of being bullied and refers to individuals experiencing aggressive, damaging, or destructive acts as a result of bullying. A student who is a victim of bullying often has difficulty defending him- or herself. Victim behaviour has been studied longitudinally and research indicates, for example, that victimisation in school is related to victimisation in the workplace later on (Smith et al., 2003).

Bullying should not be confused with teasing, where two or more persons challenge each other in more or less friendly ways (Mooij, 1992). Moreover, if two or more students quarrel or fight and are of roughly the same strength, bullying is not at stake either. A similarity between aggression and bullying is that both imply the breaking of the victim’s will in a deliberate and conscious manner, although this does not need to mean that the perpetrator is always fully aware of the consequences of their actions. Bullying may take place for years and remain relatively unnoticed by others, particularly in cases of social exclusion. Aggression compared to bullying may be much outwardly damaging and therefore be recognised more easily.

A person or a group of people can be both bully and victim at roughly the same time. Bully/victims are individuals or groups who act as bullies and are bullied themselves (Wolke et al., 2001). This may, for example, happen in situations where social relations between individuals or groups are more or less hierarchic in nature, for example, in a street gang (Haagse Ondersteunings Functie, 1994). Research-based information about different concepts of bullying using Dutch students’ self-descriptions can be found in Mooij (1992) where this author analysed the scores of 1,065 primary-school and 1,055 secondary-school students from Olweus’ (1991) questionnaire and grouped the items on the basis of their statistical interrelationships. An overview of the empirical results with respect to six concepts is given in Table 8.1. The results revealed that a student being bullied or victimised is usually bullied both directly and indirectly, or physically and socially. Also, expressing a more negative attitude towards bullying is associated with higher scores for being bullied both directly and indirectly, higher scores for trying to stop bullying, and lower scores for bullying other students and bullying the teacher. Bullying other students and bullying the teacher also correlate highly.

Furthermore, Mooij (1992) checked whether self-description of bullying corresponded with description by the student’s classmates (peer nomination). As expected, self-description of bullying other students and bullying the teacher was positively related to being described as a bully by classmates. Self-description of having a negative attitude towards bullying corresponded with being seen by others as sympathetic. Self-description of being bullied directly and indirectly co-occurred with being described by others as a scapegoat. These results confirmed that self-
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Description of bullying and being bullied corresponded with classmates’ reports of the student’s behaviour.

Mooij (1992) also showed that, first, a student perceived as bullying and quarrelling with other students is also perceived as disrupting lessons, not being liked by the nominating student, and not being shy. Secondly, liking the other student, friendship and cooperativeness with respect to the other student tend to go together. Third, being bullied often, not being liked, and being non-assertive are characteristic behaviours of the victim or scapegoat. It is interesting to note that both bullies and victims are not liked or not considered as sympathetic by others. Without encouragement, a student will not usually assist or help students who become a victim or a scapegoat, because cooperation occurs only with ‘sympathetic’ students.

How Common is Bullying and Victimisation by Bullying?

Table 8.2 presents the prevalence of bullying and victimisation by means of bullying in a representative sample of 1,065 primary-school students aged 9–12 in the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Description of concepts by items</th>
<th>N items</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Being bullied directly</td>
<td>Being bullied physically and continuously (last school-year, this school-year, during the last five days), everywhere (at school, on the way to and from school), and in different ways (being kicked, being told mean things, or called names)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Being bullied indirectly</td>
<td>Being socially isolated: disliking break-times, having hardly any good friends in class, often feeling lonely at school and during break-times, and more often thinking that you are less liked than the other students in class</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bullying</td>
<td>Bullying continuously (last school-year, this school-year, during the last five days) and everywhere (at school, on the way to and from school), and saying that you like bullying</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Negative attitude towards bullying</td>
<td>Not liking that other children are bullied, helping a bullied child of your own age, and not liking children who bully other children</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Bullying the teacher</td>
<td>Noticing children who tried to bully the teacher, more cooperation with other students in bullying the teacher, and having done this already more times during the last school-year</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Stopping bullying</td>
<td>Observing that the teacher, other children, or other people on the way to and from school are trying to put an end to bullying</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.1   Bullying concepts, descriptions by items, and number of items included
Table 8.2  Percentages of children being bullied and bullying in primary schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Netherlands* Being bullied</th>
<th>Netherlands* Bullying</th>
<th>Belgium/Flanders** Being bullied</th>
<th>Belgium/Flanders** Bullying</th>
<th>Netherlands*** Being bullied</th>
<th>Netherlands*** Bullying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not this school-year</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only once or twice</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now and then/regularly</td>
<td>15 (23)</td>
<td>14 (20)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6 (16)</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>4 (8)</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a week</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Netherlands in the school year 1990–91 (Mooij, 1992), based on Olweus’ (1991) bullying questionnaire. The findings show that being bullied ‘several times a week’ was reported by 4% of the students. If the criterion was bullied ‘once a week’, then the prevalence doubled to 8% (see the cumulative percentage between brackets), and figures further increased to 23% when the criterion was ‘now and then’. The comparable percentage for bullying in Dutch primary schools was 20%. The Dutch results can be compared to results obtained in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) which used the same questionnaire (Klasse, 1994). The percentages on being bullied ‘now and then’ or ‘more’ frequently in the Dutch and Flemish studies are identical (23%), while the percentages of bullying are similar (20% and 16%, respectively).

In a non-representative Dutch study, Fekkes (2005) studied 2,766 students aged 9–11 in a longitudinal quasi-experimental design. He used two items of Olweus’ questionnaire on bullying and being bullied, but changed the answer categories, so the results cannot be directly compared. The last two columns in Table 8.2 show adaptation of his answer alternatives to those in the other studies.

Correlates and Multilevel Causes

Development of Truancy, Poor Academic Performance and Delinquency

Development of a child’s social and affective adjustment is not only influenced by both genetic or biological and individually specific environmental or family characteristics (see Chapters 5 and 6, this volume), but also by peer characteristics (see Chapter 7, this volume) and other types of environmental variables (Goleman, 1995; Van Lieshout et al., 2001). There does not appear to be Dutch research on the genetic or biological determinants of bullying (see further Loeber & Farrington, 2001). Bullying or related aggressive behaviours may already be shown at a very young age, at home or in preschool (Olweus, 1980). Preschool teachers can notice various types of maladjusted or disturbing behaviours in students (Hermanns, 1979, 1980). However, adequate measures to stop or prevent such behaviours are not
always taken. Longitudinal qualitative research by Mooij (1999a, 1999b) revealed how 4-year-old children, from their first day in preschool, needed an educational environment that supports their capabilities and potentials. He presented various examples of children who reacted individually to an unsuitable educational situation by either externalising problem behaviours (such as stubborn or aggressive behaviours towards other students and the teacher) or internalising problem behaviours (such as psychosomatic problems and preschool avoidance behaviour).

International research reveals that bullying may be accompanied by violence and truancy, poor academic performance, running away from home, dropping out of school, or developing a criminal career (Beirn, Kinsey & McGinn, 1972; Ferwerda, 1992; Jackson, 1968; Korte, 1992; Mooij, 1980; Reich & Young, 1975; US Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1973; Van der Meer, 1988). Concerning Dutch primary-school students, however, no reliable or valid information with respect to the frequency of truancy, running away from home, dropping-out, or delinquency appears to exist. One reason for this is that, in the Netherlands, information about students’ disruptive behaviours is distributed among various domains such as schools, youth health and youth care organisations, and independent professionals (Moors, Pardoel & Bruinsma, 2005; Zeijl, Keuzenkamp & Beker, 2003). Moreover, no general judicial guidelines or measures exist for delinquent children (Gilsing & Keuzenkamp, 2004). The so-called ‘twelve-minus’ project has been designed to provide adequate treatment and support (Zeijl et al., 2003), but the project is not yet implemented countrywide.

**Social Characteristics of Group Processes**

Several social aspects of bullying and other types of aggressive processes may influence the development of desirable student behaviours. Examples are the rules and characteristics of social processes between persons or groups (Lewin, Lippitt & White, 1939; Marsh, Rosser & Harré, 1978; Mulder, 1977). Van Lieshout and colleagues (2004) investigated relationship networks of students in primary education (N=2,518) and secondary education (N=3,325). The authors distinguished between four relationship networks to indicate a student’s social competence: only friendship; friendship and antipathy; only antipathy, and without friendship and antipathy. Moreover, the authors expected that a student’s relationship network would be differentially related to his or her prosocial, disruptive, or socially reluctant behaviour. The results showed that the number of antipathies, gender, and time of measurement best accounted for individual differences in disruptive behaviours. Compared to girls, boys bullied other children more, were less prosocial, more disruptive and socially more clumsy. Moreover, older students in secondary schools were socially more active, bullied more and showed more prosocial, disruptive and socially clumsy behaviours than younger students in primary education. Students with the relationship network ‘only friendship’ scored lowest on being a victim of bullying; students with the relationship network ‘only antipathy’ scored highest on being a victim; and students with the relationship network ‘friendship and antipathy’ scored highest on bullying.
Classrooms constitute complex social group processes. Many interactional processes between students and between students and teachers occur simultaneously and take up a great deal of a teacher’s attention and their attempts to control students’ social interactions (Kounin, 1970; Mooij, 1982). Various social and didactical characteristics of academic lessons occur in classrooms. Examples are the degree to which the lessons are task- or content-oriented, directed at organisational or learning supporting activities, directed at social or group relationships between students or between students and teachers, order and discipline directed, or concentrated on external activities such as an excursion or visit to a museum. Furthermore, evaluation or assessment characteristics may stimulate or block either collaboration or competition between students. This may lead to success for some students and cause lack of success, demotivation, and compensating disruptive and bullying behaviour for others (Arbeitsgruppe Schulforschung, 1980; Kaplan, Gheen & Midgley, 2002).

A student’s bullying can be influenced by educational characteristics at different levels and may, for example, partly reflect the teacher’s shortcomings or reluctance to manage the social behaviour of all students in a classroom. In Japan, Yoneyama and Naito (2003) found that specific school circumstances and cultural conditions promoted a ‘group dynamic’ function of bullying between students and between students and teachers. The authors proposed that the following conditions contributed to bullying: stress as a result of achievement pressure and/or the perceived meaninglessness of studying, power-dominated relationships between teachers and students, and the social consequences of the use of corporal punishment by teachers. Thus, bullying processes can be influenced by characteristics or factors at different educational levels (Cronbach, 1983; Goldstein, 1995; Mooij, 1987).

**Student and Classroom Level**

To explore the relevance of the distinction between different levels in bullying research, Mooij (1992) calculated students’ relative bullying scores by expressing these as deviations from the classroom mean of bullying. Principal-factor analysis of the relative scores on bullying of students in primary and secondary education led to the following factors. A first factor was labelled: ‘a student who is being bullied relatively more’, and the behaviours that loaded on this factor were: being bullied directly and indirectly with being bullied relatively more, being bullied elsewhere than at school, being identified by classmates as a scapegoat, and being less sympathetic. The second factor was labelled: ‘a student who is bullying’. The behaviours that loaded on this factor indicated self-descriptive items about bullying relatively more, having positive opinions about bullying, being identified by classmates as a bully, bullying the teacher, and male gender. The third factor was named: ‘student bullying as a class phenomenon’. This factor combined self-descriptions about seeing several children being bullied in the classroom, seeing several children bullying others in the classroom, bullying relatively more, being bullied directly relatively more, bullying
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the teacher, and attempts to stop bullying. This factor thus represents bullying as a collective social and teacher-related process, independent from individual-level variables (factors 1 and 2).

Classroom Level

At the classroom level, factor analysis can clarify interrelationships between teachers’ didactical, organisational and social management behaviour, and mean and heterogeneity scores of students’ bullying. Mooij (1992) used a principal-component factor analysis to provide more information about bullying as a collective or group phenomenon. A first factor united various characteristics of a primary class including higher mean scores on being bullied directly and indirectly. A second factor was labelled a ‘bullying class with relatively more boys’ and grouped characteristics of a bullying class (both primary and secondary education). The third factor revealed a ‘class with a weak teacher’s management and a high degree of bullying’. The fourth factor grouped characteristics with respect to a ‘class with students from well-to-do families with easier teacher management’. In factor five, a ‘class with a socially well-functioning teacher’, the grouping of characteristics referred to higher percentages of time per week that the teacher spent on group management/social relations within class and on disciplinary aspects, a lower mean score of students on seeing that there was an effort to try to stop bullying, and less intensive surveillance during breaks.

Several groups of variables then seem relevant to long-range institutionalised class processes related to bullying and victimisation. The successive factors suggest that in the Netherlands, bullying is more characteristic of students aged 9–12 in primary education than for students aged 12–17 in secondary education (see factor 1) and to a specific class (see factors 2–5). Bullying of the teacher is related to a lack of effective management of bullying; in larger classes of students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds bullying occurs relatively more often, despite the higher percentages of time spent on social group relationships; finally, spending more time on social group and disciplinary processes in class is related to lower occurrences of trying to stop bullying, so this may prevent bullying. In particular, the third and fifth factors suggest teacher-dependent relationships between teachers’ social, didactical and organisational behaviour, and bullying phenomena and social management and disciplinary variables in class.

School Level

School characteristics are variables located at the school level, which for example describe all students, the teachers, the management, or the social-pedagogical climate of a school. An often-stated opinion is that bullying and other forms of disruptive behaviours occur relatively more in schools with higher numbers of students (school size). To check this point, Mooij (1992) correlated school size with the bullying and victimisation school mean variables. In primary schools, mean bullying variables did not correlate with school size. In secondary schools, however, significant correlations were found. The higher the number of students in school, the fewer students experienced that they were bullied directly ($r=-.52$), the fewer students
engaged in bullying ($r = -.66$), and the less heterogeneity in bullying existed in school ($r = -.57$). In addition, fewer teachers were bullied by the students ($r = -.53$). Three follow-up surveys examined bullying and violence in secondary education (Mooij, 1994, 2001, 2005; Mooij, Sijbers & Sperber, 2006). Again, the larger the numbers of students in secondary school, the lower the incidence of bullying and violence. These findings can be explained by the relationship between secondary school size and students’ family background, teachers’ social and didactical processes in class, and the level of education or ‘educational type’ of the school. Stated differently, students characterised by lower socioeconomic and educational family backgrounds usually attend smaller secondary schools characterised by lower educational levels, whereas students from higher socioeconomic and educational family backgrounds more often attend schools larger in size that provide higher educational levels.

Another factor relevant to bullying behaviour is the religious orientation of the school (Mooij, 1992). Students in secondary public and Roman Catholic schools were more accepting of bullying than students from secondary Protestant schools. In other words, students from Protestant schools behaved in more prosocial ways. Such differences may be caused by complicated interactional processes between family factors, teachers’ pedagogical and managerial behaviour styles, and the pedagogical climate of schools (Baerveldt, 1990).

Risk and Protective Determinants: Interactional Multilevel Explanations

We can conclude that bullying processes can be characterised by person, home or family, peer group, educational and other environmental characteristics which interact in complex, multilevel ways. These interactional, multilevel processes can clarify the function or meaning of ‘individual’ and environmental determinants of disruptive or prosocial behaviours. Specific individual or environmental characteristics can act as risk factors for disruptive behaviours, whereas other individual or environmental variables may act as promotive factors (Tremblay & LeMarquand, 2001). It is important to unravel these different determinants to preclude wrong conclusions or irrelevant measures. Mooij’s (1994) survey of student violence in secondary education can serve as an example. The results showed that students belonging to an ethnic minority group scored significantly higher on the perpetration of material violence, the perpetration of physical violence, and the possession of a weapon. However, in a factor analysis which included all individual factors, family background factors, and violence characteristics, ethnic minority group joined only family background variables and not violence characteristics. Multivariate analyses, in contrast to the bivariate analyses, thus demonstrated that belonging to an ethnic minority group was not related to violence, but was mainly related to family background variables.

The findings support the notion that many types of risk and promotive determinants at the individual, family, small group or class, and school level influence bullying and victimisation in schools. In particular, interactional processes with respect to variables at different levels are necessary to explain the social processes. This also becomes evident in the effects of intervention research designed to reduce disturbing, bullying, or otherwise disruptive behaviours of students. Van Lier (2002) concentrated
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The prevention of bullying in children requires that from the beginning of each child’s life the family situation should offer an accepting, child-oriented, positive and warm atmosphere combined with short, clear behavioural rules. Positively stated rules should be supported by clear procedures about how children and parents can create and maintain a mutually positive atmosphere. Social rewards stimulate the expected prosocial behaviours, while punishments should be applied to repeated violation of rules.

Instruments such as the Child Behaviour Check List (CBCL: see Achenbach, 1993) can be used to identify children’s high-risk behaviour. It is important, however, to check whether the parents’ childrearing practices fulfil the necessary pedagogical requirements as well (Bogenschneider, 2002; Goleman, 1995). The earlier the signs of persistent disruptive child behaviour, the more serious and more stable such behaviours may become (Loeber & Farrington, 2001). In this respect, Van den Boom (1995) and Stams, Juffer and Van IJzendoorn (2001) developed effective training programmes for mothers to improve, where necessary, their children’s attachment process.

A more thorough assessment of children’s problem behaviours can be based on an interdisciplinary approach to evaluate physical, physiological, psychological, or emotional characteristics that may interfere with the child’s social development. What is needed, then, is a systematic set of concepts and reliable and valid instrumentation.
to diagnose and measure effects of specific treatments (Pijnacker Hordijk & Verwoerd, 2005). Here a ‘pedagogical-didactical kernel structure’ (PDKS) can assist to identify and support various competence domains including age-based normative diagnostics but also age-independent or criterion-based diagnostics, interventions and evaluations (Mooij, 2007). We will briefly discuss these issues.

**Home-School Collaboration and Differentiated Learning**

At the beginning of preschool, it is important to screen for the relevant characteristics of each child as perceived by different caretakers to synchronise perceptions and to check the need for specific pedagogical or didactical measures (for further discussions on screening, see Chapter 10, this volume). PDKS can function as a reference framework here. For example, a screening questionnaire developed by Mooij (2000) contains seven behavioural rating categories of different competence domains, including social behaviours. This instrument can be used by the parents at intake and by the preschool teacher after the child’s first months in preschool when the child is about 4 years old. Communication about the outcomes of this screening procedure helps both parents and teachers get a clearer view of the child. Moreover, the procedure helps to improve agreement levels between parents and teachers about the child’s behaviours. This facilitates further communication about the child and supports future development and learning processes, both in preschool and at home (Bennathan & Boxall, 1996; Mangione & Speth, 1998; Mooij, 2002; Walker et al., 1998).

The results of screening can also be used to assign specific playing or diagnostic and learning activities to particular children as a basis for further pedagogical and didactical support. This is most important for children scoring much lower than their peers on one or more competencies (Vermaas & Van der Pluijm, 2004), and for high-ability children who score much higher than their peers on one or more competencies (Mooij, 1999b). If indicated, a family diagnostic and intervention procedure can be developed and implemented with all family members in order to help both child and family rearrange home or family conditions (see, for example, Goderie, 2005).

**Design of and Support by Integrating Information and Communication Technology**

To allow the early identification and prevention strategy, Mooij (2007) constructed a systemic model reflecting multilevel educational and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) characteristics with a view to improving the cognitive and social learning processes of each child in school. This author related three types of contextual conditions (differentiation of learning materials and procedures, design and use of integrating ICT support, and improvement of development and learning progress) to four aspects of learning (Diagnostic, Instructional, Managerial and Systemic – or DIMS). The combination of contextual conditions and learning aspects produced fifteen theoretical guidelines, which were hypothesised to promote multilevel optimisation of learning processes and outcomes.

The guidelines include basic issues such as the identification of competence sub-domains in the PDKS and the consequent identification and stimulation of the learning progress of individual learners and groups of learners in varying contexts.
The ICT can provide Internet-based support of learning in multilevel ways, across various types of situations. ICT also assists in individual and group assignment, prosocial and collaborative improvement, teachers’ coaching, and organisational and management transformation (Blumenfeld et al., 2000). To implement the guidelines, a software prototype was developed: ‘Diagnostic and Instructional Management Systems’ (DIMS).

The concept of ‘learning arrangements’ was then used to describe varying combinations of diagnostic, instructional and managerial characteristics which intend to support or meet the needs of specific learners in their development or learning progress (Mooij, 2004, 2007). Such arrangements differ in the degree to which they motivate and fit learners, so they correspondingly differ in their capacity to realise intended individual or group learning processes and effects. Development and implementation in practice were carried out in collaboration with teachers of some preschools and primary schools. For example, an instrument to diagnose a child’s social problem behaviour in both preschool and primary education is the school behaviour scale of Bleichrodt, Resing and Zaal (1994). DIMS were used to connect school behaviour concepts to learning arrangements characterised by specific materials and procedures (Mooij & Smeets, 2006).

As a result of these activities, preschool teachers learned to assign specific playing or diagnostic and learning activities to their students, as a basis to further pedagogical and didactical support. Actual or potential risk characteristics received more preventive pedagogical attention by youth health specialists (for example, speech specialist, psychiatrist) in the school, and if necessary, from outside the school. Teachers learned that the differences between students were generally much larger than was accounted for in the existing play and learning materials, activities and diagnostic tools.

Next Steps

Many relevant materials and procedures are available to further develop such a preventive educational system (Faber & Steensma, 1995). A systemic combination of risk-reduction and promotive-enhancement programmes is necessary to adequately support children, teachers and parents (Van Haeringen, 1977; Kirschner, 1997). For example, Förer, Kenter and Veenman (2000) focused on ‘co-operative learning in primary education’ and Hepler (1998) concentrated on social integration of children with various types of disabilities. DIMS can adopt an integrative role by ensuring that educational materials and instruments, coaching procedures, and the organisational conditions needed to stimulate and adequately monitor each student in and outside school, are sufficiently in place (Collier, 1994; Finn-Stevenson & Stern, 1997; Jones et al., 1998; Raver & Zigler, 1997; Skinner et al., 1998). In the Netherlands, this is particularly relevant to fine-tuning collaboration between youth health and education agencies according to an ‘integral youth policy’ (Gilsing et al., 2000; Scholte, 1998).
Conclusions

Bullying is often associated with truancy, poor academic performance, running away from home, dropping out of school, or developing a criminal career. Dutch research on a representative sample showed that about one in five students in primary education is either being bullied or bullying now and then, once a week, or several times a week. Being bullied several times a week happens to 4% of the students, and bullying several times a week is done by 3%. Students show different reactions to bullying. Some students may develop psychosomatic problems and school avoidance behaviour, while other students develop externalising problem behaviours such as stubbornness or conflict with other students or the teacher. Biological factors and other personal and environmental factors associated with bullying appear important (Loeber & Farrington, 2001), but have not been studied in the Netherlands. This chapter presented a multilevel approach to the causes of bullying that included individual and group disruptive behaviours in classrooms and schools.

We advocate the development of instruments to improve the assessment of individual and social functioning in preschool and primary school. Specifically, we propose a ‘pedagogical-didactical kernel structure’ (PDKS) to identify and support diagnostics, interventions and evaluations. Secondly, we advocate the use of an instrument to screen children’s characteristics at the beginning of preschool to facilitate the synchronisation of teachers’ and parents’ perceptions and to establish whether there is a need for pedagogical or didactical intervention. A software prototype called DIMS can assist the systemic improvement of children’s cognitive and social learning from preschool onwards. This Internet-based software supports learning in multilevel ways, across various types of practice situations. The preventive aspect of educational practice implies the involvement of parents, teachers, school management, school counsellors and youth or social welfare professionals from outside school.

Recommendations

We recommend that it is important to start as early as preschool with screening or identification of problem behaviours and support treatment interventions where indicated. We further advocate that parents of disruptive children need support and that ICT can be used to integrate support at home and at school. In schools, we stress the use of positive formulation and control of social conduct rules for students in classrooms, together with differential learning processes to adequately stimulate each student at his/her own level. We recommend the use of collaborative didactic procedures to improve prosocial behaviours between small groups of students, and adapt the student:teacher ratio to what is needed to adequately stimulate the students present in class. Finally, we see the integration of social behaviour professionals into teaching and learning processes as a promising option.