

Module B: VISTA: A Whole School Approach (WSA)

Unit B1: What Does the WSA stand for?

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Objectives of Unit B1:

- To enable participants to give a definition of a WSA
- To enable participants to define the benefits of a WSA
- To motivate participants to use the WSA in their own school(s)
- To enable participants to analyse the policy and culture of their/a school
- To enable participants to understand the prevention pyramid as a useful framework to carry out a needs analysis
- To enable participants to make proposals to broaden existing school practice, increase quality and achieve improved coherence

Facilitation skills to be developed through this Unit

Knowledge and understanding of:

- the sense of complexity of “problematic behaviour” within the school:
 - multi-causality of “difficult school behaviour” (bullying, violence, vandalism, skipping school)
 - being able to handle an ecological framework to interpret multi-causality
- some important characteristics of a positive school climate and how they contribute to a less problematic school environment (fewer problems of bullying and violence)
- the prevention pyramid as a supportive framework for a WSA
- the meaning and coherence of the four ‘intervention levels’ of the prevention pyramid
- the most important characteristics and qualities of the WSA
- these characteristics in participants’ own schools

Personal qualities and attributes include:

- remaining empathic vis-à-vis the various experiences of disrespectful behaviour including bullying and violence
- being touched by the needs that are hidden behind several kinds of disrespectful behaviour including bullying and violence
- being open to several perspectives with respect to “difficult school behaviour”
- being open to the interaction between context and personal experience:
 - as an explanation for difficult school behaviour
 - as a point of departure to search for solutions and prevention measures
- wanting to do something about formal and informal initiatives that contributes to improved quality of life within the school and are also problem-preventing or problem-solving

- wanting to enter into a dialogue with other members of the school community when searching for and carrying out measures for the prevention of violence and bullying behaviour at school

Pre-unit task

Participants receive Resource 1 in advance with instructions to outline an example that fits in with the topic. They describe the incident and secondly explain how they have dealt with the problem. The third part of the pre-task consists of evaluating the chosen approach (How satisfied are we? What did we like? What could be done differently and better? What options do we see to do it differently and better? What mistakes/risks should we avoid?). Note: For each participating school or institution only one example is required, in other words, colleagues must consult in advance.

Summary of current thinking and knowledge about what the WSA stands for

Deboutte (see Unit A1) argues that the WSA includes a broad combination of initiatives, actions and measures (formal – informal), which together lead to a quality school context with less problems, a higher degree of involvement and more well-being. All members of the school community are involved; sometimes even the neighbourhood and the wider community are taken into account. The WSA does not only stand for 'a quantitative, broad approach': many components are manipulated at the same time by a multitude of initiatives and measures, all part of an integrated and well-considered policy towards the school, the staff, the classroom and the individual student level. To be effective on a long-term basis, in-depth work has to be performed. This means that one is aware of the quality of the current process at the personal level (personal growth and development) as well as at the school community/group level. In-depth work leads to a change of personal attitudes (personal level) in addition to the development of the school vision, organisation and climate.

Bullying and violence at school do not happen out of the blue. Studies show that they involve complex issues. This problematic behaviour crops up from complex interactions between various factors (multi causal problems). Broadly, we can argue that it involves the interaction between "*person-related factors*" (endogenous and exogenous) on the one hand and "*context-related factors*" on the other. Olweus' (1993, 2001) programme, for instance, focuses on both types of factors. To stop or prevent bullying, schools have to work on three levels: the school level, the classroom level and the individual level. Olweus (1993, 2001) and Olweus, Limber and Mihalic (1998) recommend that the school prevention programme should include both systems-oriented and individual-oriented components.

The different elements Olweus and colleagues (1993, 2001; Olweus et al. 1998) mention are all part of the WSA. This *holistic* approach respects the many aspects and complexities of the problem of bullying and violence not only to conduct a needs analysis but also to find out what measures should be taken to stop and prevent (new) difficulties in the future (see Module D). The WSA emphasises the necessity of a school policy which is clear, outspoken

and consistent. Using this approach means that the school team (head teacher, staff, pupils, parents, governors) is ready to focus on different elements, using all the key factors or relevant levers in the actual school context. This approach can be recognized in the ZERO-model, Convivencia-model and Linkedness-model (see Units E5, E2 and B3, respectively).

"It is widely accepted that countering bullying requires a 'WSA' in which the elements and initiatives in a programme are carefully co-ordinated. Co-ordinated action, it is often said, is needed at different levels: namely, the school, the classroom, and the individual student. How this is to be done is typically incorporated in a school anti-bullying policy that describes the stand that is being taken against bullying and the procedures and actions that are to be taken in its implementation. This is sometimes described as the indispensable core feature of an anti-bullying policy. The policy may also provide guidelines on how bullying behaviour is to be discouraged and how victims of school bullying can be helped" (Rigby, Smith, & Pepler, 2004, p. 2).

To be effective the anti-bullying and anti-violence policy of a school has to respect the complexity of school life. This means that the WSA involves **all the members of the school community** (pupils, staff, parents) and even the wider community. By giving them information, by paying attention to their attitudes, life skills and competencies the outcome of the preventative and intervention procedures will become more successful.

For the same reason, the WSA aims to include **many aspects of school life**, such as the curriculum, the class and school culture, teacher style, class group management, the degree of participation, the quality of the school policy, the way people communicate and the quality of interpersonal relationships. Therefore, it is clear that a WSA relies on a clear, consistent and well communicated vision. It is important that every member of the school community is aware of the key elements of the whole school policy and vision.

Looking at the education field one can say that in most cases the WSA tries **to combine whole school planning with action research**, which means that school teams have to consider the actual school context and what or how the different school community members think and feel about it now. Once the needs analysis is finished, there are several steps to take: negotiating priorities, developing the action plan, working out implementation (information, adaptation, running), evaluation and review.

It is quite clear that the WSA integrates an **"ecological perspective"** as it is the best way to achieve a more complete picture of what is going on in a school. It also allows a more nuanced and effective approach to the (problematic) situation. Such an approach opens the door for an interdisciplinary dialogue (criminologists, sociologists, educators, psychologists, welfare workers, lawyers) in readiness to select from a wide range of initiatives and measures. Based on the World Health Organization's (1999; 2001) ecological model, which considers violence to be the product of multiple levels of influence on behaviour, that is, individual, relationship, social,

cultural and environmental factors, the VISTA training adopts an approach to the prevention of violence from the perspective of four inter-related contexts: the individual context, the interpersonal context, the social context of the school, and the context of the wider community and society (see Unit A1).

If the WSA is effective, all participants will experience the school environment as safe, sound and pleasant. In other words, working, learning and living together will be experienced with a high(er) degree of satisfaction. The members of the school community will be able to tell that there is an excellent atmosphere and a good interaction between and among all individuals. If problems do crop up, they remain limited and manageable. Therefore, there is no reason to panic.

Working out the WSA is not an easy job to do. Schools that wish to apply or maintain such a policy can make use of the prevention pyramid (see Figure 1). This prevention model is a useful instrument that can help schools to develop a comprehensive formal structure and a school-wide policy. At the same time, the model keeps an eye on the target towards which each prevention policy aims to work: maintenance or safeguarding of the quality of life.

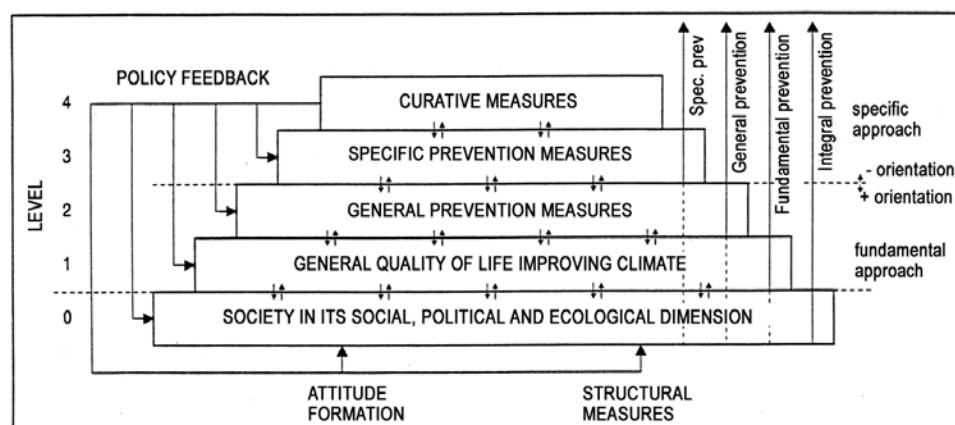


Figure 1. The prevention pyramid (Deklerck, Depuydt, & Deboutte, 2001)

The prevention pyramid was developed by Deklerck et al. (2001) and is made up of five layers or levels. The lowest level (**level 0**) stands for the *broad social and ecological context* in which the education is situated. This level affects the school organisation and the life of each party involved.

Levels 1 to 4 illustrate the *four levels* at which interventions are possible. Altogether, these four levels stand for a whole school policy.

Curative measures are located on **Level 4**, the top of the pyramid. They are taken after a problem has arisen. Here all attention is focused on the problem and the aim is to rein it in, remove it or correct it as soon as possible (STOP!). *Specific prevention measures* (**Level 3**) also target well-defined problems. The problem and the causes are known to the degree that action is taken with respect to their immediate cause. Target groups are in focus. The measures to be taken try to decrease the risk factors (YOU BETTER STOP/DO ...!).

On **Level 2** (*general prevention measures*) the apparent problem, such as drug use or bullying, disappears into the background. Here answers are supplied that reach further than any given specific problem. Paying attention to life skills, for example, contributes to the general development of students and does strengthen them anyway. The benefits can be used in different contexts and situations, not only when they are having trouble.

Level 1 initiatives focus on *the general social climate and the school culture*. Through structural as well as one-of-a-kind initiatives a school environment is shaped in which involvement (participation) and the well-being of teachers, students and parents is given more attention. These initiatives must grow from the cooperation of all parties involved.

Research shows that the measures at Levels 4, 3 and 2 are more successful and more sustainable when they are backed up by a vision, a mentality and an interactive culture that instils trust, is "value-able" and leads to positive and creative initiatives. In this sense, Level 1 constitutes the essential first layer on which the other intervention levels rely. Schools with strong participation, that encourage initiative among teachers and students and that do not fear discussions and conflicts, for example, opt for a more self-evident way of working with trusted students. It does not surprise us that in such schools a mentality reigns that boosts enthusiasm in teachers and students. In this situation, the fed-up students or the irritated teachers are not the ones who set the tone.

The prevention pyramid shows that (a) 'fundamental' prevention policy consists of the combining and gearing to each other of curative, preventive and social climate-promoting measures (and-and instead of or-or); (b) the improvement of the context (school culture and school climate) provides an ideal basis for curative and preventive initiatives; (c) one may not bypass the need for person-oriented and structural measures; and (d) the formal and informal levels complement each other significantly.

It is clear that the WSA to bullying and violence at school is based initially on cooperation with the entire school team. Other partners (inside and outside the school) can then become involved.

Responsibilities of the Unit facilitators

Your tasks within this Unit are to:

- send to all participants information about when and where the session will be held and details of preparatory reading to be done
- familiarise yourself with the Unit text and the facilitators' notes
- plan the session to meet the needs of the participants
- ensure that all relevant resources/materials are copied and/or prepared
- lead the session and all the activities

Sequence of activities in Unit B1

This Unit represents a one-day training of five hours plus breaks. It allows the facilitator to change the development of the session. However, it must be ensured that each building block mentioned is given in-depth attention. The session is aimed at a maximum of 25 participants (five groups of five people).

Materials

Text bundles with attachments and worksheets¹
Name cards (also required for group assignment)
Resources
Flipcharts/board/slides
Space that allows working in small groups

Activity 1 Step I: Exchange of practical stories (bullying and violence at school events) (45 minutes)

Purpose

- To exchange examples of bullying and violence at school

Materials

Resource 1 *Pre-unit task* (completed)
Name cards (also required for group assignment)
Flipcharts/board/slides
Space that allows working in small groups

Procedure

After welcoming participants (each one will receive a name card with their position and school/work location) they will be split into small groups (colour of name cards will determine group assignment). Participants from the same school will be sitting together for this task. Make sure that at least two school delegates sit together per group. In each small group, the different examples prepared using Resource 1 *Pre-unit task* are exchanged among the participants. One example per group should be chosen which will be submitted (told) later to the whole group. The facilitator will summarize each example concisely on a board/slide/flipchart.

Activity 2 Step II: Analysis of the various examples on the basis of the perspective exercise (70 minutes)

Purpose

- To analyse the various examples outlined in Activity 1 using the perspective exercise as a foundation

Materials

Resource 2 *Worksheet 1*
Resource 3 *Worksheet 2*
Flipchart and pens

Procedure

The facilitator checks that everyone has an adequate understanding of the examples or incidents (maximum 5) highlighted in Activity 1 and whether the

¹ We suggest the facilitator makes a small brochure in which the participants can find an overview of the content of this part of the training, the information summary, the work sheets (activities) and the Resources 1 & 2.

summaries are sufficient. Then, Resource 2 *Worksheet 1* is distributed to each participant. The facilitator asks each one of the small groups to take a new look at the case they have chosen. Everyone in this group has to choose one particular perspective (see Resource 2). They can choose the perspective of:

- the student supervisor - mentor
- the victim
- the perpetrator – offender - bully
- the parents (of the victim)
- classmate(s) - peers
- the head teacher
- teacher(s)
- ?

Recommended prompt questions are:

- *How does he or she experience the incident? (What feelings does the incident generate in this person?)*
- *What does he or she think of what has happened?*
- *What would he or she like to happen?*
- *What responsibilities does he or she see in himself/herself?*
- *What obstacles or difficulties was s/he faced with as a result of this situation?*

Discussion in small groups

The idea is to develop a conversation in each group whereby the answers to the aforementioned questions are brought together. Each group concludes its discussion with the completion of Resource 3 *Worksheet 2*. The aim is to make an inventory of what “reasons” or “causes” were mentioned during the conversation and who (regardless by whom) is addressed to assume any form of responsibility.

Debriefing

Each small group reports concisely about their discussion to the whole group: the responses to Resource 3 *Worksheet 2* are exchanged. Overlapping should not be repeated in order to allow for smoother discussion. The facilitator sees to it that all answers are written on flipcharts (A3-format). This is made possible by involving participants in the reporting: seven people will receive a flysheet on which one of the characters is mentioned. They note down all that is said concerning their character. In this way the group will get a visual synthesis that indicates who is addressed as regards their responsibility and in what way. When the seven synthesis flipcharts are completed, they are put up on the wall. The facilitator gives an additional interpretation by reiterating the unmentioned responsibilities (e.g., with respect to school organisation, school infrastructure, neighbourhood characteristics). In this way a complex web of (f)actors is obtained that (in)directly influence each other and that are at the basis of these kinds of problems.

Activity 3 Step III: supplying of information and analysis frameworks (75 minutes)

Purpose

- To supply information and analysis frameworks

Materials

Resource 4 *Worksheet 3*

Procedure

(1) *Positive school climate: building blocks* (15 minutes)

In broad terms, two types of schools have been defined: performance-oriented schools and community-oriented schools (see Figure 1). The ideal school culture, taking into account the wellbeing of students and teachers, seems to be a healthy mix of both. This is why it is desirable to create an environment that (a) stimulates the students as regards instrumental learning (knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes) whilst at the same time (b) gives them the feeling that they “belong”. What is important, therefore, is to pay attention to each student, to captivate them and challenge them, to emphasize involvement and participation and to provide sufficient freedom and security. This mix of wellbeing (quality of life) and mind-broadening teaching, training and cooperating is a challenge for every school.

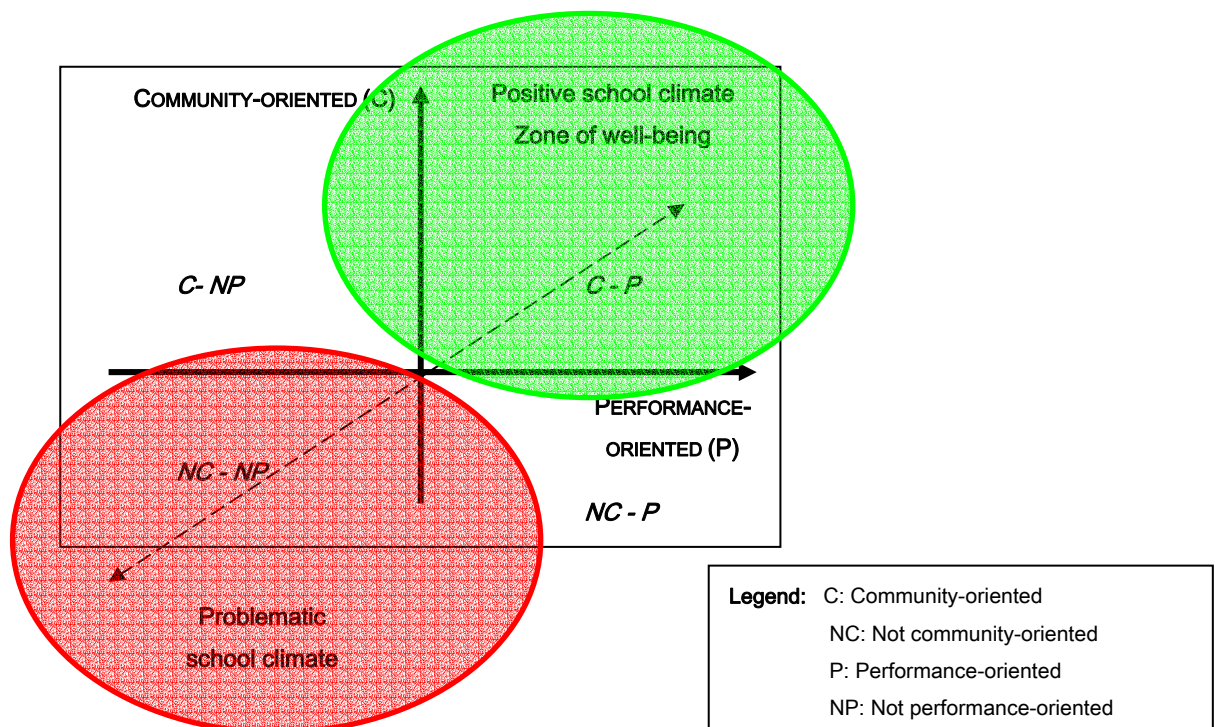


Figure 2. Characteristics of a positive school culture (Based on De Fraine, Van Damme, & Onghena, 2004)

In between exercise (just to verify that the information was clear and well understood) (15 min)

The facilitator opens a small discussion with the whole group by asking:

- What do you learn from Figure 2?
- In which part of the diagram would you place your school? What are your reasons?

(2) *Prevention pyramid: supportive framework for a WSA* (45 minutes)

(See Summary section (pp. 4-5) and Resource 4 *Worksheet 3*). Using Resource 4 *Worksheet 3*, each small group is asked to place a total of at least five initiatives, proposals or measures that were identified using Resource 3 *Worksheet 2* within the prevention pyramid. This exercise illustrates at what level one wants to develop action and where the need is situated (and where it is experienced as less important). After each small group has accomplished the task, there is another exchange moment. If there is a projection of an 'empty prevention pyramid', the facilitator can use Post-its to put all the initiatives on that projection. This exercise gives the facilitator the opportunity to check if all the various initiatives were placed correctly by the members of the session group. If necessary, s/he will bring improvements or corrections.

Debrief

The large group is asked to formulate a few conclusions. These may involve the usability of the prevention pyramid and gives the facilitator the opportunity to check out if the prevention pyramid was well understood.

Activity 4 Conclusion: Step III Overview of intervention models offered by the VISTA training package (15 minutes)

Purpose

- To offer an overview of the intervention models offered by the VISTA training package

Materials

Resource 5 *Overview of VISTA interventions* on overhead/Powerpoint

Procedure

To complete 'Step III' the facilitator provides a slide that gives an overview of some of the intervention models that form part of the VISTA training. S/he motivates the how and why of the assigned positions within the prevention pyramid.

Activity 5: Step IV: Debriefing process: The WSA: a definition (80 minutes)

Purpose

- To debrief participants on the work of the training session and to offer conclusions

Materials

Resource 6 *Worksheet 4*

Procedure

The facilitator reorganizes the group by bringing all the school delegations together in small groups (put every school delegation in a different group). Looking back on what has been learnt and discussed in the session each small group is requested to accomplish four different tasks using Resource 6 *Worksheet 4*:

Task 1: When you look back on the information and discussions of today's training session, which arguments convinced you to opt for a WSA in your school(s) to stop and prevent bullying and violent incidents?

Task 2: When you return to your school, which arguments will you use to convince your other school members (head teacher, co-ordinators, staff, parents, pupils) to opt for a WSA?

Task 3: Here you find a definition of the WSA. Put the most important elements of this definition into the framework below and make clear whether these elements are already part of your school culture and policy.

Task 4: Conclusion: Regarding the result of the last task (Task 3), what advice can you give to your own school? What kind of challenges do you see ahead? Give your arguments too.

Allow about 50 minutes for this part of the activity.

Debriefing (30 minutes)

Every school delegation has five minutes to give a brief conclusion to the whole group.

Activity 6 Evaluation of the meeting ('circle time') (15 minutes)

Every participant gets the chance to evaluate the training session.

The facilitator asks participants to pay attention to:

- personal involvement (1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5)
- quality of the theoretical input (clear – relevance – useful)
- quality of the methods used
- relevance of the session towards every day school practice
- circumstances in which people had to work (timing – infrastructure – technical support - ...)

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Further reading and additional materials

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Websites

<http://www.linkedness.be>

<http://www.cfchildren.org/cfc/strf/str/strindex/>

<http://www.interventioncentral.org>

<http://www.police.govt.nz/service/yes/nobully/index.html>

http://www.police.govt.nz/service/yes/nobully/kia_kaha/whole.html

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<http://www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying> : Bullying in Schools and what to do about it (Dr. Ken Rigby's pages)

Resource 1 Pre-unit task

Dear [participant's name],

You have signed up for the VISTA Unit B1 training. We are delighted that you/your school wishes to participate.

Since we are seeking to make connections with the specific school reality, we would like to ask you to carry out the following task in advance of the training session. If you plan to attend the training with a few colleagues, we request that you carry out this task together. Rest assured, we will be sure to use the material you provide.

Send, fax or e-mail your reply to [name and address of facilitator]. We would appreciate it if you could do this at least two weeks prior to the start of the training session.

Many thanks and see you soon!

Best regards,

[First name and surname of the facilitator]

Pre-unit task - Part 1

Outline a real-life incident of bullying or violence below in which you/your school was recently involved. Describe concisely what happened.

Pre-unit task - Part 2

**How was this incident of bullying or violence specifically handled?
What initiatives were taken and by whom?**

Pre-unit task – Part 3

Evaluation of the chosen approach for dealing with the bullying or violent incident:

(a) How satisfied are you with the chosen approach?

Very satisfied/Satisfied/Reasonably satisfied/Dissatisfied/Very dissatisfied

(b) What did you like about the chosen approach?

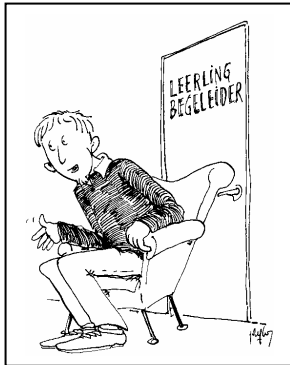
(c) What would you have done differently? What could have been done differently and better?

(d) What possibilities or opportunities do you see ahead?

(e) What errors and risks must be avoided?

Resource 2 Worksheet 1

Choose one specific situation that involved bullying behaviour/violence at your school. Try to conjure up this situation as well as possible and then describe the reactions of the following characters. Do this using the prompt questions provided. In order to work quickly, everyone must choose **one** character. The remaining characters will be examined later.



STUDENT SUPERVISOR - MENTOR

How does s/he experience the incident? What feelings does the incident generate in him/her?

What does s/he think of what has happened?

What would s/he like to happen?

What responsibilities does s/he see in her/himself?

What obstacles or difficulties was s/he faced with as a result of this situation?



VICTIM

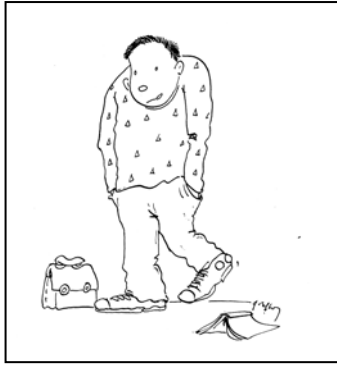
How does s/he experience the incident? What feelings does the incident generate in him/her?

What does s/he think of what has happened?

What would s/he like to happen?

What responsibilities does s/he see in her/himself?

What obstacles or difficulties was s/he faced with as a result of this situation?



PERPETRATOR - OFFENDER - BULLY

How does s/he experience the incident? What feelings does the incident generate in her/him?

What does s/he think of what has happened?

What would s/he like to happen?

What responsibilities does s/he or she see in her/himself?

What obstacles or difficulties was s/he faced with as a result of this situation?



THE VICTIM'S PARENTS

How did they experience the incident? What kind of feelings did the incident generate in them?

What do or did they think of what has happened?

What did they want to happen?

What responsibilities did they see in themselves?

What obstacles or difficulties were they faced with as a result of this situation?



CLASSMATES OR PEERS

How did they experience the incident? What feelings does the incident generate in them?

What do or did they think of what has happened?

What did they want to happen?

What responsibilities did they see in themselves?

What obstacles or difficulties were they faced with as a result of this situation?
What kept them from assuming responsibility?



THE HEAD TEACHER – SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

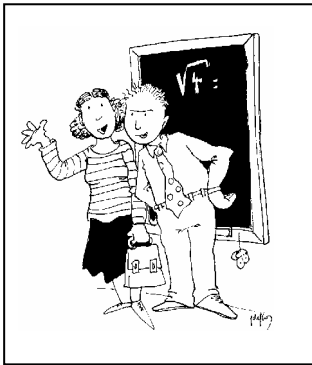
How did s/he experience the incident? What feelings did the incident generate in her/him?

What does s/he think of what has happened?

What would s/he like to happen?

What kind of responsibilities does s/he see for her/himself?

What obstacles or difficulties was s/he faced with as a result of this situation?



TEACHER(S)

How did s/he or they experience the incident? What feelings did the incident generate in her/him or them?

What does s/he or they think of what has happened?

What would s/he or they like to happen?

What responsibilities does s/he or they see in themselves?

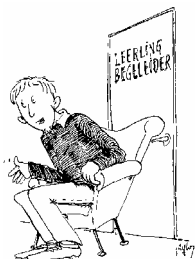
What obstacles or difficulties was s/he or were they faced with as a result of this situation?

Resource 3 Worksheet 2

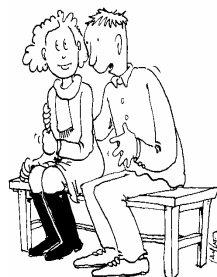
Circle all characters that were addressed with respect to their RESPONSIBILITY in the discussion (from any aspect whatsoever). Write what was expected of them under their name. (Question mark: Here you can fill in any additional people).



victim



student supervisor



parents



classmates/peers



offender/bully



head teacher



teacher(s)



.....

+ ?



Where did you see possibilities for action or intervention (problem solving and preventive)?

Personal level	Interpersonal level (at school)	Class group	School context	Home/family

OTHER:

Resource 4 Worksheet 3

Please try to put the proposed initiatives, actions and measures in this empty prevention pyramid. What do you see and conclude?

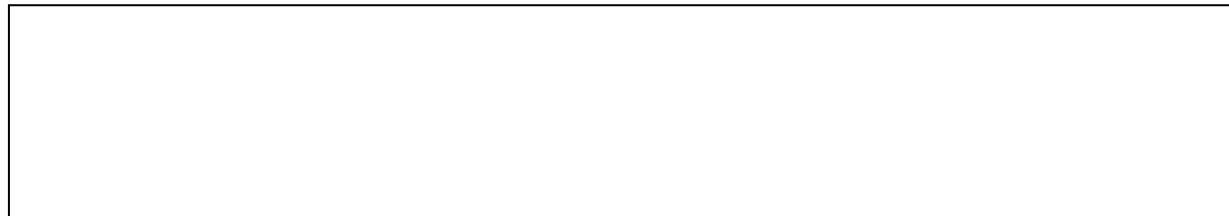
Level 4:



Level 3:



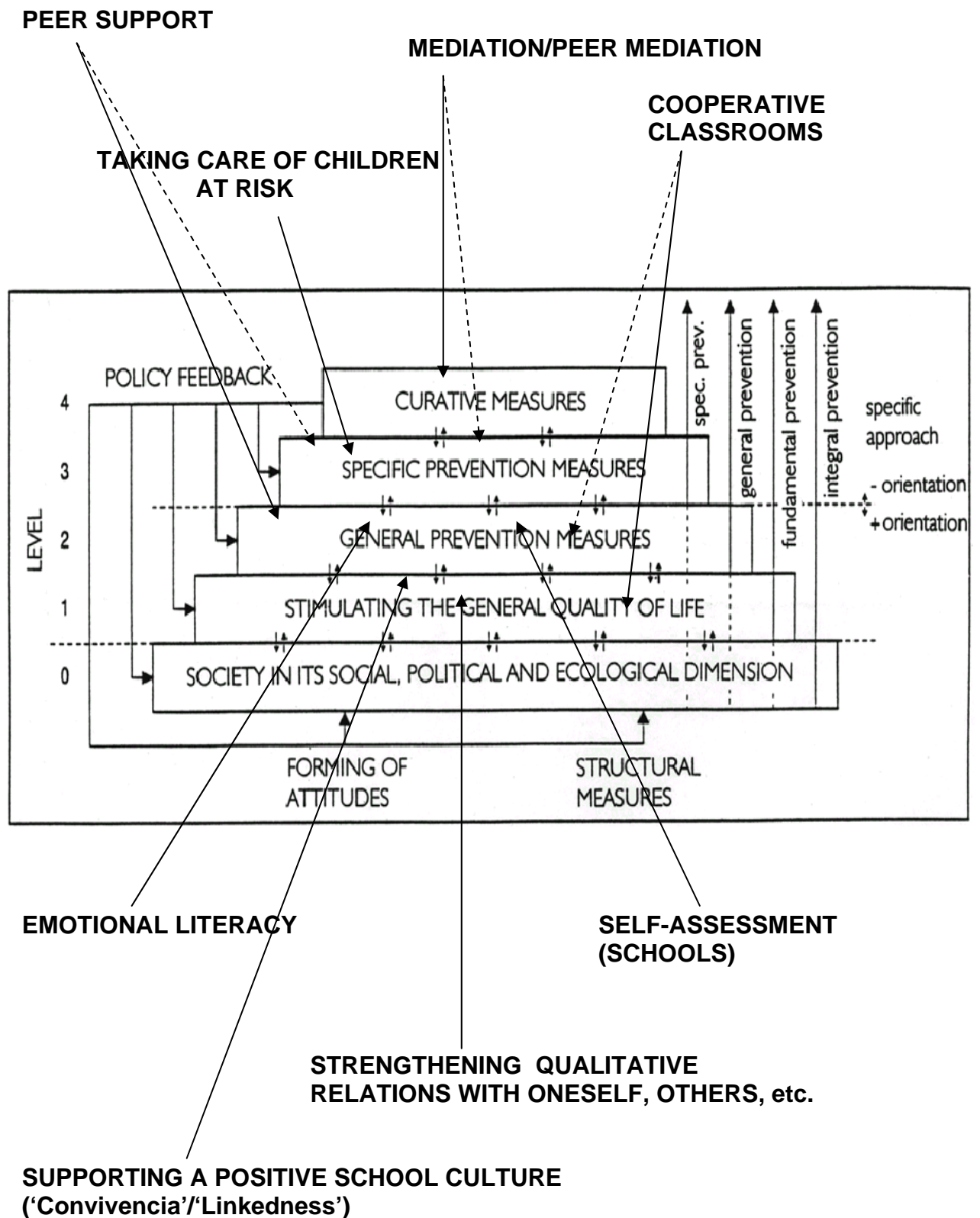
Level 2



Level 1:



Resource 5 Overview of VISTA interventions



Resource 6 Worksheet 4

Debriefing and conclusions

Procedure:

First of all you have to think over the four following questions. Please write down some keywords after each question:

Task 1: When you look back at the information and discussions of today's training which arguments convinced you to opt for a WSA in your school(s) to stop and prevent bullying and violent incidents?

Task 2: When you return to your school, which arguments will you use to convince your other school members (head master, co-ordinators, staff, parents, pupils) to opt for a WSA?

Task 3: Here you find a definition of the WSA. Put the most important elements of this definition into the framework below and make clear whether these elements are already part of your school culture and policy.

"The WSA includes a broad combination of initiatives, actions and measures (formal – informal), which together lead to a quality school context with less problems, a higher involvement and more well being. All the members of the school community are involved; sometimes even the neighbourhood and the wider community are taken into account.

The WSA doesn't only stand for 'a quantitative, broad approach': many components are manipulated at the same time by a multitude of initiatives and measures, all part of an integrated and well-considered policy towards the school, the staff, the class/group and the individual student level.

To be effective in the long term in-depth work also has to be performed which means that one is aware of the quality of the current process at the personal level (personal growth and development) as well as at the school community/group level. In-depth working leads to a change of personal attitudes (personal level) and the development of the school vision, organisation and climate as well" (Gie Deboutte).

Key elements	Put an 'X' if that key factor is already part of your school culture and policy
<i>A BROAD COMBINATION OF INITIATIVES, actions and measures</i>	
<i>which lead to a quality school context</i>	
<i>with less problems, a higher involvement and more well being.</i>	
<i>ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ARE INVOLVED.</i>	
<i>(pupils, staff, school director/headmaster, parents, ...)</i>	
<i>(even the neighbourhood or the wider community)</i>	
<i>These initiatives are part of AN INTEGRATED, WELL-CONSIDERED SCHOOL POLICY</i>	
<i>towards the school</i>	
<i>towards the staff</i>	
<i>towards the class(es)/group(s)</i>	
<i>towards the individual student level.</i>	
<i>To be affective also the IN-DEPTH WORKING has to be performed</i>	
<i>which means that the school pays attention on the change/support of personal attitudes (personal level)</i>	
<i>and the development of the school vision, organisation and climate as well.</i>	

Debriefing: Looking at the result of Task 3: *what advice can you give to your own school? What kind of challenges do you see ahead? Give your arguments too.*