Training of Anti-Bullying Self-Assessment (ABSA) Consultants

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1. Introduction

This document provides an outline for a training that can be given to consultants who want to coach schools when doing a self-assessment of a secondary school's antibullying policy. The training is part of the antibullying certification procedure that was developed by EAN members in 2018-2020 and offers instruction for consultants on how to use the procedure and the products.

In this document we present a possible program, and a template for a PowerPoint presentation. We also give some pedagogical suggestions and for external consultants.

1.1 Goals

The goal of a full ISO-certification procedure is to review the school antibullying policy, to improve it to make it transparent. The certification safeguards that the procedure is internally logical and secures that all agreed procedures are carried out in the proper way.

A school self-assessment and a management decision on improvement are the first two steps in this process, before the detailed procedures are being described. We think it is important that the entire school population is involved in the self-assessment and in the decision-making about the improved antibullying policy. In a way, such an interactive self-assessment is an exercise in evidence-based participation in the decision process. The goal of the consultant or consultant of this process is to facilitate the smooth operation of the self-assessment and decision-making process, to make sure that all stakeholders are involved and heard, and at the same time to provide input about scientific insights about effective antibullying policies.

The goal of this training is to prepare consultants, whether they are external consultants or internal school staff who are responsible for facilitating the assessment process, to implement the self-assessment and decision procedure properly and smoothly.

1.2 Focus on school support, not audit

The self-assessment and the following management decision about improving antibullying policy are the first two steps in a formal ISO-certification audit. A formal ISO certification audit can only be done by trainers that are certified by an ISO-certification audit institute. Such a formal audit is a judgment of the quality of the school. Although the self-assessment includes instruments to make a self-diagnosis, this part of the procedure is NOT an external judgment. This training should therefore be seen as a way to SUPPORT schools in doing the self-assessment and making sound decisions, BEFORE they ask for an external audit.

1.3 Duration and number of participants

This training can take between three and eight hours. The trainer can minimize or extend the duration of the program to the needs of the group. It is advised to organize some supervision workshops after the training to share experiences with consultancy and explore how to solve some dilemmas that you will probably encounter.

We advise to keep the number of participants between 10 and 15.

1.4 Trainers

The training is developed for trainers who are already experienced with doing teaching or training. With this we mean that the trainers are experienced in creating a safe group atmosphere, can make sure that all participants are participating in an equitable way and that the trainer does not get lost in his/her own stories, or in the stories and experiences of participants, but can effectively manoeuvre between the goals of the training and the personal needs of each participant.

Because we expect that teachers may want to facilitate the self-assessment procedure internally in their own school, we take this into account in this guide. Because of this, we do consider that

teachers are often trained to "teach" rather than to "train", and that their position in the school is different from an independent external consultant.

Before doing the training, we advise the trainers to study the certification procedure manual, because it contains a wealth of background information on how to do the assessment and what are elements of an effective antibullying policy. We don't repeat this information in this manual but it is required knowledge to be able to facilitate this training.

We also advise that the trainers read the Consultant Exam Questionnaire carefully before doing the training, to make sure that the answers are explicitly integrated in the training, and that the participants have the chance to give the correct or best answers.

2. Program

The program we offer here is planned to take about three hours. In this chapter we give a summary and then we go a little bit deeper into each program topic. Some of the topics come with suggestions to make the training a little bit more elaborate, which may the extend the program up to eight hours.

When you facilitate training, make sure that you have notebook on which you can know down the most salient learning experiences. You will need this at the end of the training to report these back to the participants.

Summary of the program

1. Welcome, introduction to the program, ground rules

2. Round of expectations

3. Introduction to the self-assessment, Q&A

4. Working with case studies

5. Wrap up and conclusions

2.1 Welcome, introduction to the program, ground rules

Welcome the participants, give a short introduction of the program of the training and introduce the concept of ground rules.

Ground rules are the ways participants in the training want to interact with each other during the training. When you agree on ground rules before you start, you minimize the risk that the participants engage in less effective discussions or offend each other by expressing their opinions in less careful ways. Making ground rules for a training is necessary when some aspects of the training may be controversial or elicit very different opinions on a how a school or people should function. Ground rules can be dictated, but get more commitment when all participants agree in advance on how to deal with disagreements, personal comments or high emotions.

Ask the participants: "what rules would you like to agree on in this group to make you feel safe during the training, even when we have disagreements?" Write down everything the participants say on a poster. If the participants are not used to this, or do not come up with enough rules, ask some questions to direct them to rules they could agree to but can't come up with. The four generalized basic rules the Dutch consultant Frits Prior formulated could be a reminder of four areas of rules that you might want to include:

1. **Respect**: we have space to express our own identity and opinions and we are tolerant and polite towards others when they do that
2. **Within boundaries**: we all have limits and some limits are group norms; we are sensitive to this and don't cross accepted boundaries
3. **Peaceful**: we express our needs in a peaceful way, we don't use physical, verbal or mental violence (including unpleasant comments)
4. **Approachable**: we recognize that everyone makes mistakes, and we are always open to positive or critical feedback

Don't dictate these rules, but ask the participants if they can think of something in the designated area, and write down *their* formulation.

Finish the exercise by asking the participants if everyone agrees with all the rules that have been written down and if something is still missing. When everybody agrees and the list is final, put the poster on the wall in a visible place. When the participants transgress their own rules, help them to correct themselves. Do this consistently because if you don't, the participants will see the ground rule exercise only as a symbolic act with no relevance to the actual practice in the training.

The total amount of time for the introduction and the ground rules should not be longer than 15 minutes.

2.2 Round of expectations
Introduce this exercise by telling we are going to do a round of expectations and that everyone has about 2 or 3 minutes to do this. Before you start you can allow the participants to write down their personal expectations on a sheet of paper (which remains private).

In the round, you can ask everyone (1) to list their name and current function/job, (2) their ambition to be a self-assessment consultant, and (3) what they hope to learn in the training.

Try to keep the participants to 3 minutes maximum. People get tired after listening for 20 or 30 minutes, and with a training of 10 people you should be able to complete the exercise in 30 minutes. Don't exceed the exercise time by allowing it to take 45 minutes or more. To make it shorter you can skip question 2.

2.3 Introduction to the self-assessment, Q&A
Give a short introduction of the self-assessment. We provide a PowerPoint presentation for this. In the presentation, the focus is on two elements: (1) the steps you need to take in the self-assessment and some pointers to effectively implement them, and (2) the six effective elements in high impact antibullying policy.

The presentation should take about 15 minutes. Ask participants to hold their questions until the end of the presentation. Take another 15 minutes for answering questions.

We are now been working for 1.5 hours it is time for a break of about 15 minutes.

2.4 Working with case studies
Explain to the participants this activity is about discussing case studies. In the next chapter we provide 3 case studies for the participants to discuss. For discussion in each group we suggest the following format:

Group work

1. Read the case study

2. Each participant writes down their own solution and how they would advise about it

3. The solutions are shared (and noted down on a poster), participants are allowed to ask informative questions

4. The group discusses advantages and disadvantages of every solution

5. The group formulates recommendations on how to solve the situation in the best way

This exercise format focuses the participants to discuss the case studies in a factual way, and to distinguish between their own values/opinions and objective/multi-actor subjective assessments. It may be that the facilitator needs to intervene in the group work to point at the ground rules at times.

Plenary debriefing

After the group work, have plenary short reports of each of the groups and allow some Q&A time (not discussion).

The subgroup phase of this activity and take between 30 minutes or 45 minutes, and the plenary reporting and take between 10 and 30 minutes, depending on whether you will allow some further reflection on the presented recommendations.

Alternative: critical incident

An alternative way to organize this activity is to allow the participants to formulate their own case studies. This may also be useful as a supervision exercise in a follow-up workshop. In this case it is advised to use the critical incident format:

Choosing a mutual interest critical incident

1. Participants think about a specific moment where they had to make a consultancy decision

2. The participants share their topic by summarizing it in one or two sentences and without giving away the solution they chose

3. The group chooses one "critical incident" they want to analyse because it interests most of them

Getting all the information about the incident

4. The bringer of the incident tells the story more elaborate, uses the present tense, and tells about the context of the incident *until* he/she had to decide on what to do

5. The participants can ask the bringer of the incident *factual* questions; these can be about the context but also about what the bringer felt at the time or what his or her assessment of the situation was (but don't allow discussion in this phase)

6. All participants then write down how they would react if there were in this situation

Sharing solutions and dialogue

7. The solutions of all participants are shared, participants can ask each other informative questions; the intention should be to be curious about why other people chose solutions, not to engage in discussion or in arguments to convince others that one solution is the best (dialogue, not debate)

8. All participants then write down if they would change their reaction in view of the additional information, they got from other participants

9. The new solutions of all participants are shared and learning experiences are formulated

What happened in real-life

10. The participants are probably curious about what really happened, so the final step is to ask the bringer of the critical incident how he or she reacted when the incident happened

A critical incident exercise will take between 45 minutes and 1.5 hour. It can best be done plenary, because it requires a rather strict facilitation. For participants it can be frustrating that they are not allowed to express their opinion in the beginning of the exercise, but one of the strengths of this exercise is that the context and the facts are explored first before participants are allowed to make their own assessments or suggestions or to formulate own opinions. Exploring the context and the facts before weighing different kinds of solutions is a key competence of an consultant or consultant.

Suggestions for extension
If you have more time in this training, you can repeat this activity with other case studies, or by using the six effective elements of antibullying policy to reflect on the case studies. If there are teachers in the training who want to introduce the self-assessment procedure in their own school, but have not yet found a way to convince the management of the value of it, you could organize a session on how to approach the management to convince them that this self-assessment is a useful activity.

2.5 Wrap and evaluation
At the end of the training, review what you have done during the day and tell the participants that you think were the most salient learning experiences and recommendations.

Ask if the participants if have missed anything in the training that they want to come back to in the future.

Ask the participants how the experienced the training.

Announce a follow-up supervision workshop or/and allow the participants to ask you questions online.

3. Case studies
Based on our experience during the pilots in 5 countries, we offer 3 case studies of challenging situations consultants of the self-assessment might encounter.

Case study 1: Students criticize teachers

School A has 500 students divided over 4 academic years. The survey among students has been filled in by 100 students from year 3 (15-year olds). Fifteen of the 60 teachers for being the teacher survey.

The results revealed significant differences between the opinions on the school safety by students and teachers.

- The students found the school to be less safe than the teachers reported
- They felt much less than teachers that they were helped by teachers.
- In addition they reported that 15% of the students regularly felt "offended" by teachers and 11% felt that they were "ridiculed" by teachers.
- In the student review of the school, the same sentiment was reported by interviewed students and it became clear that teachers regularly make jokes that are seen by students as putting them on the spot and putting them down. They experienced this as ridiculing and offensive.
- The students recommended that teachers stop ridiculing students.

Imagine you are working in school A and you are facilitating the teacher review workshop.

You have just presented the results of the surveys and recommendations of students. Then you ask if there are any questions or reflections on these results.

The first question you get is a teacher who seems quite angry. He says: "This is a very safe school. The survey is probably not representative. In which classes was student survey done? I want to know if there was an overrepresentation of troublemakers."

What do you do?

Case study 2: The discipline controversy

School B has 800 students divided over 4 academic years.

The school is in a disadvantaged neighbourhood with a multicultural population. Many of the parents of the students are not or extremely low educated and about 40% is without a job. Apartments are small, and many students spend a lot of time on the street where they speak a language mix "street jargon". Interaction of the street is competitive, rough and dominated by masculine, somewhat older adolescent boys. Fights and petty theft are common and not seen by youth as abnormal or criminal activities. A local police officer states: "you have to monitor these guys constantly, they have no moral fundament, they will double cross you at any moment".

The students take all these influences into the school. They have trouble conforming to middle-class expectations of teachers, like sitting still, listening, orderly discussing topics, distinguishing between facts and opinions, being tolerant and making a difference between your religious backgrounds and the way you treat other people.

The survey among students illustrates this "street culture":

- It shows high levels of rough behavior and students consider this "normal".
- The student survey also shows low self-esteem, a high-level of insecurity and a low level of assertive skills.
- In the student review, students complain about the chaotic organization of the school, with lessons dropping out and nothing to do in between. They say they get bored, and that this "of course" leads to trouble.
- Students also complain about each teacher having their own rules in their own classes and they complain about unjust punishments: teachers having preferences for certain students.
- Students recommend the school to organize the school better, and especially to not have lessons dropping out, with short notices.
- Students recommend to have a play room to spend their time between lessons.
- Students indicate that they want more clear rules and just but flexible punishments.

In the teacher workshop, the six effective elements for antibullying policy are discussed and teachers are surprised that punishment is considered a less effective way of maintaining safety. A majority of the younger teachers is inspired by this and agree: "they have a big mouth but a very small heart, they need to learn to better deal with their emotions and how to express what they want". A small, but rather loud group of older teachers, who teach Woodwork, Metalwork and Physical Education see this differently and say that "these kind of students need proper supervision and punishment to make sure they follow the rules". They refer to their 30 year experience with educating lower-class students. The group of younger teachers falls silent.

What do you do?

Case study 3: Management commitment

School C is a large school with over 1500 students divided over 6 academic years. The school has different buildings. There is one building where students stay their first and second year and where they get all subjects while they explore their future career. At the end of the second year, students are divided over the other school buildings which serve different types of academic levels/streams: vocational, preprofessional and pre-academic.

There is a central management team and each of the buildings/streams has their own sub-management. There is a central antibullying policy document and there are 4 key behavioural rules which are disseminated on posters in all the buildings. The implementation of the policy is delegated to the building/stream managers.

A teacher of the pre-academic stream is enthusiastic about the self-assessment and convinces the central school management to engage with the project. The school management agrees because they think it is a useful educational activity. The coordination is delegated to the teacher of the pre-academic stream who took the initiative.

The coordinator manages to get a more or less representative student response on the survey of 20% of the total school population, but only 25 teacher responses (on a total staff of 250).

The student survey reveals that there are different school cultures in buildings, which is reflected in the experiences and opinions of students.

- The behaviour in the vocational building is more rough, with a high level of 40% of the students who experience pushing, fighting and scolding, all of which are considered normal. Boys are the main perpetrators.
- In the pre-academic building, the main forms of unpleasant behavior seem to be gossip and nasty online messages. Girls are both more perpetrators and victims of this. But the level of unpleasant behaviour is not extremely high (5-10%).

A first teacher review workshop is organized during a study day for teachers, but it is not mandatory and only one of 8 alternative workshops. 25 teachers turn up. The time is already over after discussing the results of the surveys. Urged by the coordinator, the central management organizes a second (non-mandatory) workshop 3 weeks later. Another 25 teachers turn up, most of them being different ones than in the first workshop. They cannot really agree on recommendations. None of the events are visited by management representatives.

In a final conversation with the central management, the coordinator proposes a number of recommendations for a diversification of the central antibullying policy for different study buildings/streams. The management compliments the coordinator with the educational work done, but concludes the school is doing well with the current general antibullying policy. They think it is a good idea that the teachers of the vocational stream can be "encouraged to give more attention to rough behavior" and that a one hour lesson on online safety will be suggested to the health teacher of the pre-academic stream.

As a coordinator of the self-assessment, you feel frustrated by the lack of support by the management during the assessment and you think the 2 adopted interventions are not a reflection of the conclusion of the self-assessment, even though the self-assessment could have been more thorough.

What do you do?

4. Pedagogical suggestions

This short chapter gives a few suggestions on how to fill in the role of an consultant. It should be clear that the school management is the "client". The school management has to facilitate the proper implementation of the self-assessment and will eventually decide about the recommendations. An consultant can advise on this and even give some support for this, but has to stay aware of his or her limitations.

Be clear about the role as an consultant

At the very start of agreeing on the contract or planning of the self-assessment, the consultant and the school management have to be clear about their division of responsibilities and tasks. How the division of tasks and responsibilities is, depends on who the consultant is. The consultant can be a member of the school management, a member of staff who is appointed to be self-assessment coordinator, or an external consultant from an NGO. In each position, the responsibility will be slightly different.

In any way, it is important to agree from the beginning on:

- That the number of respondents on the student survey should be representative, on the timeframe for the collection of responses, and who is responsible for approaching teachers to ask students to fill in the survey in their lessons.
- An adequate number of respondents on the teacher survey is also essential, but most teachers have little time and the management has to decide whether the survey is mandatory, and if it is voluntary, how they can make sure that there are enough responses to make the survey results reliable.
- The management has a role in choosing the date, in facilitating the logistics and in the communication about the student review. During the student review day, the students have to be taken off the roster and their teachers have to be informed about this. During the day, students interview other students, and teachers need to be informed about the logistics, and that some students may be taken out of the lesson for 10 minutes to be interviewed.
- The time invested in the teacher review workshop is flexible, but our experience shows you need at least three hours to be able to formulate recommendations. The management has a role in making sure that at least a representative number of teachers is represented in the workshop. In a small school this could be (almost) the entire team, but in a large school, the management has to decide how to organize either a series of workshops or one workshop with teachers who represent important sections of the team.
- The entire self-assessment yields a formidable amount of data and recommendations. It would be good to agree in the beginning of the assessment on how to document these. Making detailed reports of all the phases of the assessment takes a lot of time, and if it is done by an external consultant, it will also cost money. It is best to agree on how detailed and how long the reports on each of the assessment phases are. If you do this in a minimal way, the consultant can limit himself or herself to only noting down the (main) recommendations (see annex 9 and 10 of the certification procedure guide).

Listen

Although we call the person who guides the certification procedure an "consultant", his or her main task is to listen and to report. It is good to keep in mind that students, teachers, managers and possibly parents have different ideas and that somehow all these ideas deserve a place in the final proposals for antibullying policy.

It may be that at times it is difficult to listen in a neutral way to responses or opinions of stakeholders in the school, especially when there are at odds with your own convictions or expertise. In such cases it is advisable to keep your own convictions to yourself for the moment. First listen, ask questions, and make completely sure that you properly understand what the other stakeholder says, or what their hidden underlying need is.

As an consultant you don't have to keep your expertise or opinions completely to yourself. But make sure that you voice them only after you have heard the other properly, and that you formulate your own conviction in such a way that they are not offensive to others. For example, when you have an opinion that differs from a stakeholder, ask about the opinions, feelings and needs of the stakeholder and then summarize what you heard and check if you heard the stakeholder correctly.. *Only when* the other stakeholder *feels free to receive a possibly other view than their own*, you can offer your view. The best way to do this is in the following way:

1. State what you see, the facts, in a neutral way and check if the stakeholder agrees with your description of the situation
2. Give your interpretation of the facts and make clear that this is *your* interpretation
3. Note that there could be different solutions for problem, and that you are thinking about which one of these solutions may be the best of the alternatives; list the alternatives and give your preference for one or more alternatives
4. Ask your stakeholder to reflect on this

This way of carefully engaging in a dialogue about a problem is less offensive for people and especially important when stakeholders are heavily invested in one particular solution.

Science and your own reflection

One tension we have noticed in our project is that many schools have a traditional way of looking at discipline and antibullying policy and that those ways are often at odds with science. To be crude: discipline and punishment are common in schools but not effective or even counterproductive. "No blame" and "restorative" methods are much more effective, but require a school system which is less hierarchical, less competitive, and not solely focused on narrowly defined cognitive academic performance. In addition, schools and teachers may see students as subjects rather than actors in the learning process, which automatically creates a demotivation problem because students are supposed to do as the teachers tell them, rather than choosing to learn what interests them. So in a sense, traditional school systems tend to create demotivation and disciplinary problems. Most schools are very eager to solve their student demotivation and disciplinary challenges, but they may not be so eager (or even allowed) to structurally change the school organization for this.

As an consultant, you may have personal views which agree with science or not. And stakeholders in the school may have different views on this as well. These differences within yourself and within the school community can be a challenge to navigate.

We advise consultants to reflect on how they personally relate to the six recommendations we formulated for effective antibullying policy. The degree to which you agree with them is a bottom line in the way you advise school stakeholders. Although scientific recommendations can always be challenged, they cannot be taken as completely optional guidelines; they do give direction. The challenging part of some of the recommendations is that they challenge the basic organization of the current traditional school systems. This makes them potentially controversial and in some schools, difficult to implement because they require a more strong revision of the system than school management or teachers may want, or is allowed by authorities. The consultant also has think about

how he or she will deal with the emotions and practical objections to making major changes in the school organization.

Although the school management is the "client" of the school self-assessment, the consultant does not have to be a slave to all the wishes of the management. A good advice is not always to agree with the client. However, going against the client's expectations may require courage and diplomacy. As a consultant you do risk to lose the connection with the client/school management. This is a balancing act that the consultant has to learn in practice.

Dealing with school fears

One of the issues we encountered during the pilots with the antibullying certification procedure is that schools may feel hesitant to engage in a self-assessment because it might result in a judgment of the quality of the school. And to an extent, this is true: at the end of the self-assessment we offer a checklist which "scores" the school in some way. Even though we propose not to use it as an audit but as a diagnostic tool to help formulate improvements in policy, any suggestion that something may not be good in the school can feel as a judgment. This may be a threat for the public image of the school or for the functioning of some stakeholders in it.

During the development of the self-assessment we had several discussions about how to deal with this fear. We formulated some solutions:

- focus on participation and hearing the needs of all concerned
- see the process as a self-learning exercise and hear criticisms as suggestions for improvement
- the consultant can hear the resistance against scoring as a sign of insecurity of the school and think of ways to reduce this insecurity (rather than oppose it)
- one way to deal with this is to engage in a dialogue about what is blocking the school to learn from experiences
- another way is to stress that scoring is meant as a diagnostic tool and not as a judgment
- another way is to avoid external negative public relations by not publishing the results, and by celebrating the positive points and labelling the improvements

A specific type of fear the school may have in contemporary Europe, is the recommendation to better deal with social inclusion and non-discrimination. In regions or countries with right-wing or populist political parties, or conservative local attitudes, this can be a challenge. In those cases we advise the school to rethink their own position towards how to "teach" prosocial behavior to the students and how they can align this pedagogy with the local community. Thinking this through will probably lead to the recognition that being prosocial and providing safety for all requires taking a political position. Although this is frightening for many schools, it is necessary that schools recognize that *not* taking a position, and allowing social exclusion, is also a choice. Education about social relationships is never neutral or objective. So here again, we have to realize that making choices may require some courageous and strategic decisions about how to deal diplomatically with objections to prosocial choices.

Dealing with counterproductive choices by the school

It may be that the school implements the self-assessment, but then makes decisions that are not based on the results and recommendations, or are at odds with effective elements of antibullying policy. For the consultant this is a difficult situation. In the pilots of the certification procedure we had discussions about this, and we did not come to a joint solution.

Some partners thought that the school management is the client and therefore always right. It is certainly true that "commitment" of the management is an important determinant of the success of school policy, so advising a school policy to do something they do not really agree with, is counterproductive anyway.

Other partners thought that as consultants we should "make the school stakeholders aware" of what is the right thing to do (based on science and on our expertise). This implies that "good" advising contains an element of convincing stakeholders.

In truth we think that a good consultant is a "critical friend" of the school. The consultant listens, informs, coaches, helps, but sometimes also offers critical feedback. Ultimately, the school management makes a decision based on – or despite – the recommendations of the consultant and of other stakeholders in the school. This does not mean that they are *right*, but they do have *the right* to make the decision.

In one of the pilot schools of the certification project, the school decided to adopt a school policy that was almost opposite to the recommendations based on the survey and the opinions of students. Of course, the (in this case external) consultant of this school was very disappointed. Still, in the division of responsibilities, the final decision lies with the school management. This means consultants have to learn to cope with disappointment. A good way to do this is to reflect on the needs of the school and to try to understand why the school made this decision. The consultant can become aware that even counterproductive choices can be "tragic expressions of an underlying need" (Marshall Rosenberg). In "nonviolent communication" practice, the way to deal with this is to have self-empathy. This means that you allow yourself to feel your disappointment and your underlying need to be recognized in your consultancy work, but also to recognize that the decision of the school is - in the end - not your responsibility.

5. Consultant Exam Questionnaire

This is a short assessment to check if the trained consultants have understood the ABSA-method and how to deal with consultancy. They need to have 8 out 0f 10 questions correct to pass the test.

In the first paragraph we provide a printable multiple-choice question form.

In the second paragraph we provide the questions with the correct answers in *italics* and a commentary.

Consultant Exam

Circle the correct or best answer. Only one answer is the best.

1. What is the aim of the antibullying self-assessment procedure?

a. To check the school's policy and provide a certificate

b. To assess if the school is following scientific effective elements in their policy

c. To organize student participation

d. To facilitate that the school population is involved in making joint decisions

2. What is the correct order of the steps in the procedure?

a. Collecting documentation, surveys, student review, teacher review, management decision

b. Collecting documentation, surveys, teacher review, student review, management decision

c. Surveys, teacher review, student review, collecting documentation, management decision

d. Collecting documentation, teacher review, student review, surveys, management decision

3. Why are ground rules very important both in training and in student and teacher reviews?

a. Because everybody has to abide by the rules and therefore they have to be clear

b. In most schools, rules are ambiguous, and this is a chance to clarify them

c. By agreeing on a joint rules, there is more commitment

d. Discussions about sensitive issues which people may disagree require specific rules

4. Name at least 4 of the 6 effective elements discussed:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5. Why is it important to collect the current documentation about antibullying policy?

a. To check if the school has thought about antibullying before

b. To be aware about the theoretical start situation

c. To know what has been communicated to students until now

d. To know if the school abides by legal standards

6. Why is it important to have representative data collected with the surveys?

a. The survey results will be completely worthless and you will not be able to formulate recommendations

b. All students and teachers should have the opportunity to make their opinion known, and if they don't fill in the survey we simply don't have (all of) their opinions

c. Teachers and managers may doubt the validity of the results and not use them as a scientific basis for further discussion

d. You won't be able to submit the report as a valid scientific publication

7. What is the best way to deal with teachers being upset about criticism of students?

a. Tell them to shut up because these are the scientific findings and the direct opinions of students

b. Tell the teachers already in the beginning of the procedure that they may get some criticism by students and that this should be taken seriously

c. Make sure that you diplomatically formulate recommendations based on the survey and reformulate criticism of students in their review in a diplomatic way that teachers can cope with

d. Do some expectation management and engage in a dialogue about how critical feedback of students can be seen in different ways

8. What is the best way to deal with a school ignoring the six scientifically based effective elements for their antibullying policy?

a. The school management is the client, the client is King, you have to agree with them

b. The six elements are just one interpretation of a series of scientific researches; the consultant should not take them as an indisputable truth

c. As a consultant, you try to balance your advisory role between being a listener and facilitator on one hand and on the other hand being a critical friend and advisor

d. The school management should be told clearly that as a consultant, you distance yourself from their final decision because it is very probable the policy is not going to work

9. What is the most important aspect of your role as consultant?

a. To carefully listen to what students, teachers, school managers and parents say

b. To facilitate the process of self-assessment, enriching it with your attention and expertise

c. To offer good advice based on science and on your own expertise

d. The carefully formulate recommendations that closely link into the results of the survey and the student and teacher reviews

10. Who are the most important stakeholders in the procedure?

a. Students

b. Teachers

c. School management

d. Parents

Answers to the test

The correct/best answers and feedback are given in *italics*.

1. What is the aim of the antibullying self-assessment procedure?

a. To check the school's policy and provide a certificate

b. To assess if the school is following scientific effective elements in their policy

c. To organize student participation

d. To facilitate that the school population is involved in making joint decisions

D is the best answer. A is wrong, this refers to an ISO-certification procedure. The other answers refer to partial goals of this procedure.

2. What is the correct order of the steps in the procedure?

a. Collecting documentation, surveys, student review, teacher review, management decision

b. Collecting documentation, surveys, teacher review, student review, management decision

c. Surveys, teacher review, student review, collecting documentation, management decision

d. Collecting documentation, teacher review, student review, surveys, management decision

This order of the steps works best according to the pilots we did, and is the order we give in the manual.

3. Why are ground rules very important both in training and in student and teacher reviews?

a. Because everybody has to abide by the rules and therefore they have to be clear

b. In most schools, rules are ambiguous, and this is a chance to clarify them

c. By agreeing on a joint rules, there is more commitment

d. Discussions about sensitive issues which people may disagree require specific rules

Ground rules are not the same as school rules, they are set for specific trainings or discussion sessions to make sure that everybody feels safe and respected, whatever they say

4. Name at least 4 of the 6 effective elements discussed:

The six elements are:

(1) Start the school year with creating safe class groups,

(2) Learn how bullying works (group processes) and how to act against it,

(3) Involve all staff, students and parents in the development of safe school policy,

(4) Support positive behavior and avoid putdowns and punishment,

(5) Creating a positive school climate and avoid only attention on handling incidents,

(6) Jointly revise the school rules every year, make them clear and carry them out consistently

5. Why is it important to collect the current documentation about antibullying policy?

a. To check if the school has thought about antibullying before

b. To be aware about the theoretical start situation

c. To know what has been communicated to students until now

d. To know if the school abides by legal standards

Virtually all schools have thought about bullying before, documentation may reveal this or may just be copied. The documentation will tell you what the school intends to do about antibullying in theory. The documentation may or not tell you something about how it is communicated or how it is received by students or teachers. Although the school documentation may tell you if the school about by legal standards, this may not say very much about how these are implemented.

6. Why is it important to have representative data collected with the surveys?

a. The survey results will be completely worthless and you will not be able to formulate recommendations

b. All students and teachers should have the opportunity to make their opinion known, and if they don't fill in the survey we simply don't have (all of) their opinions

c. Teachers and managers may doubt the validity of the results and not use them as a scientific basis for further discussion

d. You won't be able to submit the report as a valid scientific publication

In the pilots, we encountered the problem that teachers or managers may doubt the validity of the survey data, especially when the conclusions are critical of the current policy or of teacher behavior. The survey results should provide a scientific fundament for the further steps in the self-assessment. Even when the results are not completely representative, they may still give an indication of what a sizable portion of the school population experiences and thinks. In addition, the student and teacher reviews will offer more and more detailed information about what students and teachers think. Still, when more students and teachers fill in the surveys, the picture painted will be more valid and reliable. It is rare that schools will use their survey report to make an academic publication, and even if they do, they need to take into account that scientific journals usually require more strict ethical considerations then the ones we advise in ABSA-procedure manual.

7. What is the best way to deal with teachers being upset about criticism of students?

a. Tell them to shut up because these are the scientific findings and the direct opinions of students

b. Tell the teachers already in the beginning of the procedure that they may get some criticism by students and that this should be taken seriously

c. Make sure that you diplomatically formulate recommendations based on the survey and reformulate criticism of students in their review in a diplomatic way that teachers can cope with

d. Do some expectation management and engage in a dialogue about how critical feedback of students can be seen in different ways

Research shows it is common that students have different experiences, perspectives and opinions than teachers or school managers. It is good to do some expectation management about this in the beginning of the procedure, by telling the participants that the feelings and opinions on the results

may be widely divergent. This is also a reason why we recommend strongly to work with ground rules, so the participants in teacher reviews, student reviews and the consultant training have a frame to cope with these different feelings and opinions. It is counterproductive to tell teachers to shut up or to reformulate student opinions. It is better to offer teachers a framework on how to discuss these different opinions with each other rather than just tell them to take students opinions seriously.

8. What is the best way to deal with a school ignoring the six scientifically based effective elements for their antibullying policy?

a. The school management is the client, the client is King, you have to agree with them

b. The six elements are just one interpretation of a series of scientific researches; the consultant should not take them as an indisputable truth

c. As a consultant, you try to balance your advisory role between being a listener and facilitator on one hand and on the other hand being a critical friend and advisor

d. The school management should be told clearly that as a consultant, you distance yourself from their final decision because it is very probable the policy is not going to work

The school management is the client, but a good consultant does not blindly follow the inclinations of the client, especially not when they are inadequate according to the consultant's expertise. Although the six elements are an interpretation, there are based on a review of the available literature and most scientists are more or less in consensus about them – although most researchers have personal preferences for some of the elements. A key role of the consultant is to keep in contact with management and encourage them to make the "right" decisions. Distancing yourself from the management contravenes this role as consultant to keep close. So being a listener and facilitator and at the same time asking critical but diplomatic questions to help students, teachers and management to get more enlightened, is the best way to be a good consultant.

9. What is the most important aspect of your role as consultant?

a. To carefully listen to what students, teachers, school managers and parents say

b. To facilitate the process of self-assessment, enriching it with your attention and expertise

c. To offer good advice based on science and on your own expertise

d. The carefully formulate recommendations that closely link into the results of the survey and the student and teacher reviews

Although listening is important, a good consultant goes further than this. He/she helps the school to go through the logistics of the process of self-assessment. In the report of the surveys, the consultant adds own expertise by interpreting the percentages and formulating them in conclusions and logically following recommendations. In the facilitation of the student and teacher reviews, the consultant facilitates the workshops not only technically, but links the survey results with the own experiences and opinions of the participants and helps them to formulate their instinctive feelings into more argumentized opinions and feasible recommendations. Scientific elements and the practical experience of the consultant with antibullying in schools and these type of workshops are invaluable elements that add to the quality of the entire procedure. The continuous attention for the quality of the process, the input of all the participants and carefully adding your own expertise jointly predict the success of your consultancy.

10. Who are the most important stakeholders in the procedure?

a. Students

b. Teachers

c. School management

d. Parents

The school management. They are responsible for adopting and implementing the school policy and developing a strategy to commit the entire school population with it. Moreover, they are the stakeholder hiring or appointing you.