Violence at school: challenges for expansive learning of Educational Psychologists.

Erausquin C.

Violence at school:
challenges for expansive learning in Educational Psychologists

Beyond the focus on individuals, toward a sociocultural perspective

Author: Prof. Mgter. Cristina Erausquin - ARGENTINA
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Facultad de Psicología
Universidad de Buenos Aires

ARGENTINA

Roadmap

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Aims

1. The work analyzes *situational mental models* of professional practice (SMMP) that psycho-educational agents of two major argentine cities – Buenos Aires and La Plata – displayed in their narrations about their experience facing violence at school.

2. To identify *challenges, obstacles, strengths and critical knots* in *representational systems* of psychologists in education.

3. To highlight open new directions of research, using the *Complex Matrix of Analysis* to explore *Expansive Learning* (Engeström, 2001)

Conceptual framework

Units of analysis – L. Vigotsky, 1934 – and Zone of social construction and reciprocal appropriation- Newman D., Griffin P., Cole M., Lab of Comparative Human Cognition, 1989.

Relational shift in conceptions of expertise – Anne Edwards, 2010 -.

 Activity Theory Second Generation - Change, Historicity, Multi-voicedness, Contradictions in Expansive learning. - Yrjo Engeström, 1991, 2009 -.

Mental models and Cognitive Change in Educational Contexts.
 Dimensions of change: 1)From implicit to explicit,2) From simple to complex and 3)From realism to perspectivism – María José Rodrigo, 1994,1999 -.

Mediated action and artifacts, tension between agents and tools – James Wertsch, 1999.

Mediational Expanded Basic Triangle: School Activity System (ENGESTROM, 1991)
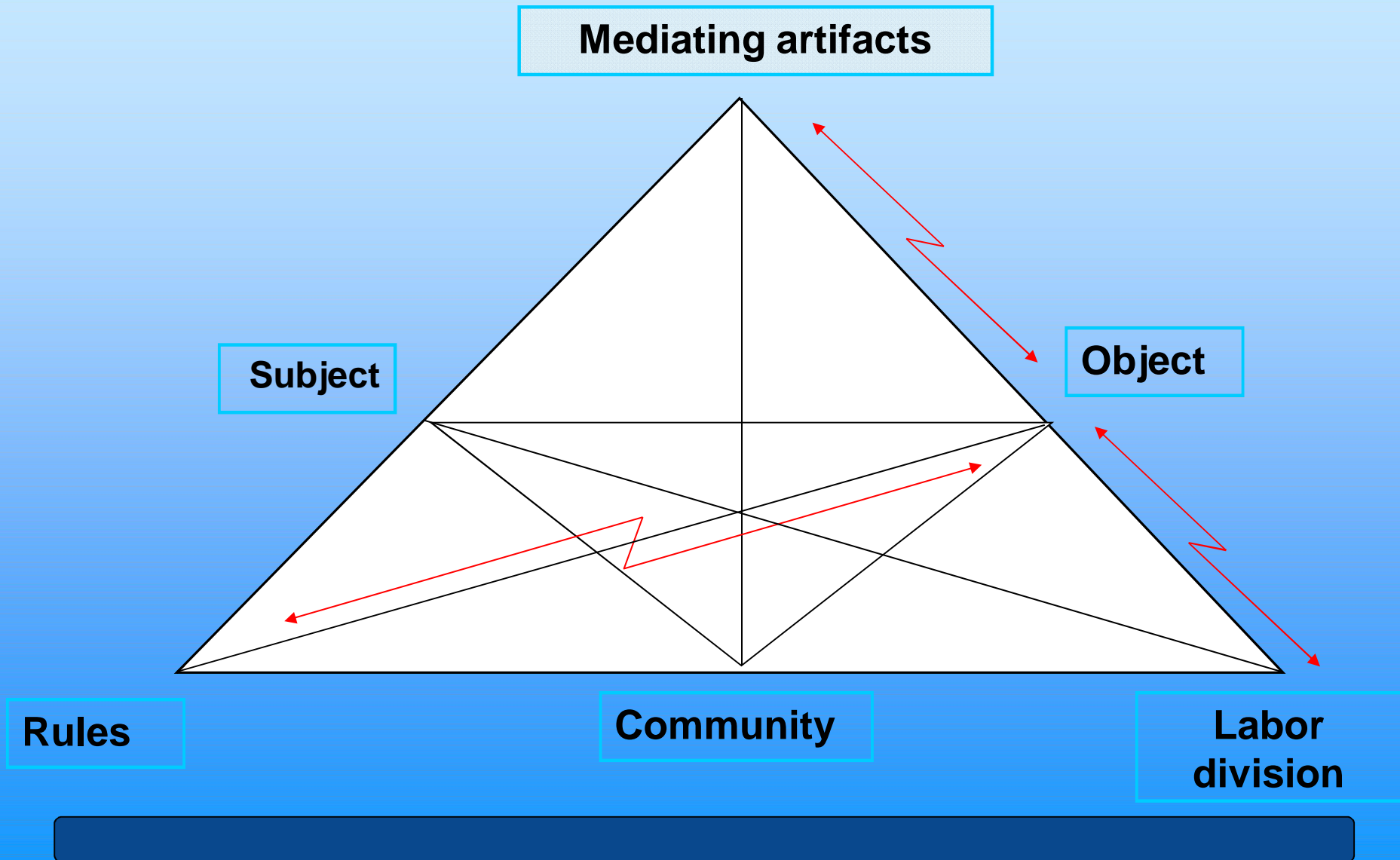
Categories and links

- MM of Psychologists are related to meanings and senses they build and reciprocally appropriate or negotiate with social actors of educational communities in which their practice is situated;

- Using or changing cultural artifacts of mediation, currently available in socio-cultural contexts, they may change the context as much as their representational system;

- Through the process of internalization and externalization (Engeström, 2001), contradictions crossing *activity system* may shape opportunities to change or only reproduction.

Methodology

Descriptive and exploratory study with qualitative and quantitative analysis**:**

- Questionnaires about Situation-Problems of Violence in Professional Intervention at Educational Contexts (Erausquin, 2009)

   [Administered to 130 Psycho-Educational Agents – mostly Psychologists – working in various schools, in two main cities of Argentine – Buenos Aires and La Plata -.

   At the beginning of two specific Postgraduate Courses]

- Data were analyzed with the Matrix of Analysis of Psycho-Educational Professional Trajectories (Erausquin,Basualdo, 2006), adapted for exploring perspectives on "interventions in violence problems".

Questionnaire about Situation-Problems of Professional Intervention in Psychologist Activity

1 - Think in a *violence situation-problem* of your own experience in which you have participated as a *professional psychologist* in formal or informal educational context.

    a. Describe the problem mentioning the most significant elements of the situation.

    b. Explain the elements concerning to the history of the problem - before the intervention - and concerning to the context in the moment of the intervention.

2 - Tell each one of the **actions** through which you, as the *professional* (or the team) intervene in the problem, detailing the moments and steps of the intervention.

    a. Who **decided** the intervention?.

    b. Which were the **aims** you had in the intervention?

    c. **On what or whom** did you intervene? Why?

3 - Which **tools** did you use when you intervened? Why?

4 - Which **result** was achieved with that intervention? To what do you **attribute** that result?

Findings: *strengths* in Situation-Problem Analysis

- Axis 1 - From the simple to the complex:

  47 % of narrations *state a complex problem articulated in its different dimensions, factors and bonds* (indicator 4) and 44%, also *include in problem analysis inter-subjective and psycho-social networks into and beyond the school* (indicator 5)

- Axis 6 - From the realism to the perspectivism:

  61% of narrations *show perspectivism through their des-centering from a unique version and perception of the problems* (indicator 4)

Findings: *critical knots* in Professional Intervention

- Axis 3 –¿One or different agents and agencies in the activity?:

    19 % *present the lonely activity of psycho-educational agent* (indicator 3); 50% *present the psychologist activity with others without joint construction of problem or intervention* (indicator 4).

    Obstacles for inter-agency and inter-disciplinary links are related with historic and current difficulties to build anything with others and among everybody in our context.

The role of Emergency

Scenes of urgency are displayed in narrations of violence, situated in and between pupils, professionals or institutions.

Scenes overflow the mental frame of professional agents, who frequently are involved in reactions with the pressure of an immediate demand,

without programming or previous analyzing,

without searching the background of the problem and

without the time or the space for joint decision, joint activity or reaching a consensus.

The urgency may be related to the pain and the damage that is tried to prevent into victims, but it becomes an obstacle that prevents working out and balance analysis of action and problems.

Critical knots

Critical knots and conceptual barriers seem to be linked with dominant explanation models.

Models with clinical focus, reducing the problems to the individual as the unit of analysis, are overflowed by conflict situations in interpersonal and institutional dynamics.

The psychologist frequently lacks conceptual frames for explaining those problems and supporting the use of innovative tools.

Results

- The factorial analysis demonstrated reliability of instruments for data collection and identifies *representational systems* of Educational Psychologists.

- The construction of agents intervention on violence unveils the *fractures in social memory of activity systems* distributed with distinct intensities in the groups identified.

- As Daniels stated (2009), in our context, the relationship between violence and inclusive education involves: a) the importance of emotional holding for teachers and pupils; b) the worth of social justice and equality for exchanging experiences; c) the problem of educating a diversity of people with only one method, one direction, one rhythm and the same goals for everybody; d) the difficulties for psychologists to work with teachers to build inclusive solutions for behavior-and-learning; e) the former role of Psychologists, in Education, linked with the assessment of special educational needs pupils by using IQ tests.
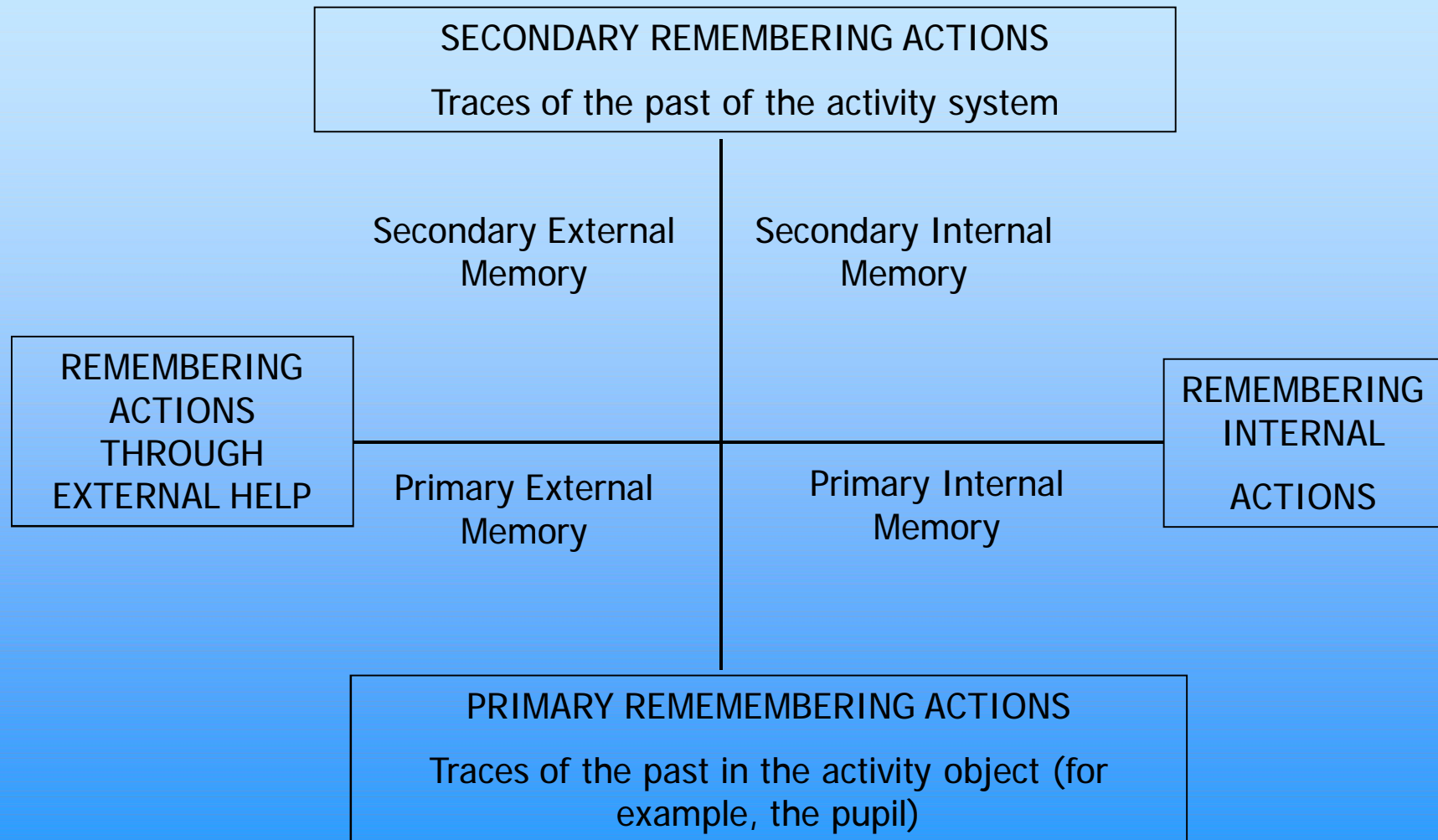
Data Analysis
Three Figures of Intervention in Mental Models of Psycho-Educational Agents
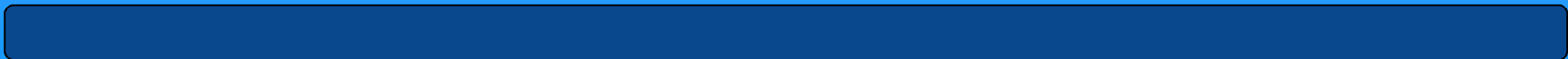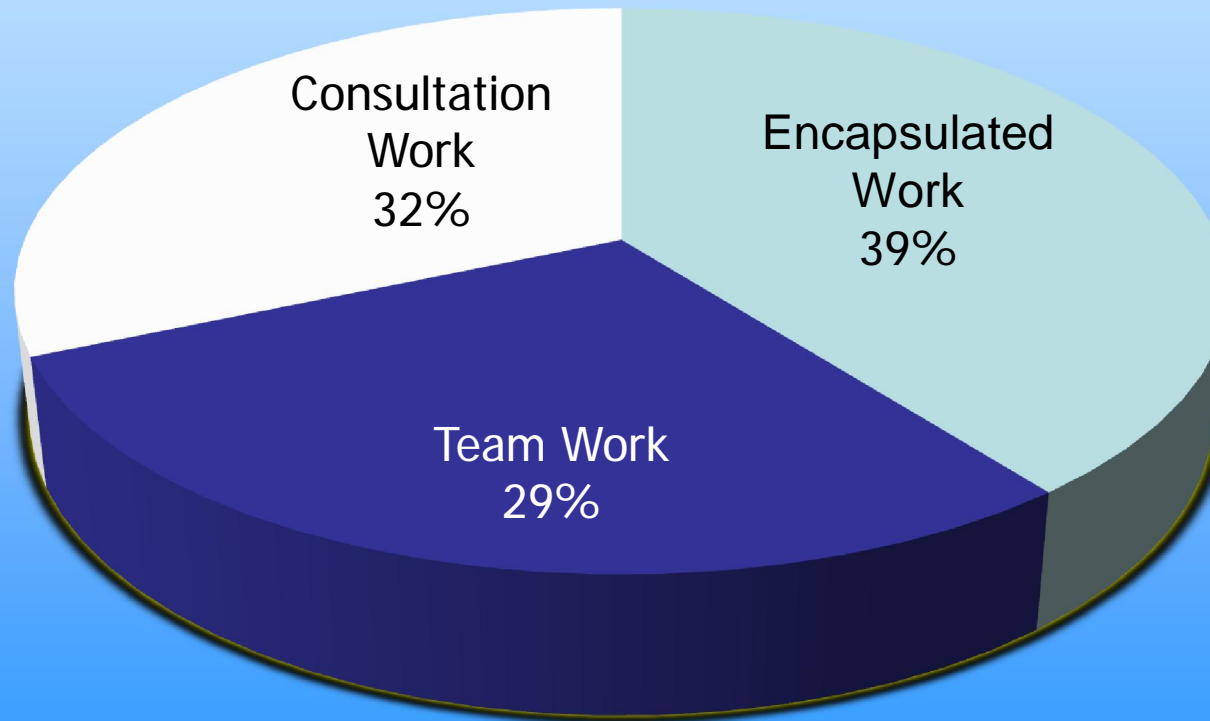
Three Figures of Intervention on Violence Problems, according to psycho-educational agents narrations

- **Encapsulated Work:** Psychologists work alone, without building the problem or the activity plan with others. Decisions are of their exclusive responsibility or externally adopted by others. Unidimensional objectives and actions are directly addressed to the pupils with alleged deficit. Over- or dis-involvement is found.

- **Team Work:** Psychologists take part and are part of institutional teams or communitary devices oriented to educational issues, and their narrations are in first person of plural, beginning with "we".

- **Consultation Work:** Psychologists intervene throug consulting of and jointly with other agents, mostly teachers or principals, nearer the daily classroom or school activity, embedded in problems but with distance and objectivity, mediating and mediated by teachers . Higher effect on pedagogical issues.

Memory and Oblivion in Activity Systems (Engeström, 1992)

SECONDARY REMEMBERING ACTIONS
Traces of the past of the activity system

| Secondary External Memory | Secondary Internal Memory |

| REMEMBERING ACTIONS THROUGH EXTERNAL HELP | | REMEMBERING INTERNAL ACTIONS |

| Primary External Memory | Primary Internal Memory |

PRIMARY REMEMEMBERING ACTIONS
Traces of the past in the activity object (for example, the pupil)

Historicity: Primary and Secondary Memory

- **Group 1**: 38%. Primary Remembering Actions recover traces of memory about *activity object* - a patient health history or a pupil school history -, without regarding him or her as a part of a social weft or community to which he or she belongs. Interventions aren´t long-term strategic in problem solving neither leave a "mark" in the system.

- **Group 2**: 26%.Memories of activity system, without effects on strategic intervention.

- **Group 3**: 14%.Without traces of activity system memories, but reaching strategic interventiosn.

- **Group 4**: 22%. Historicity displayed in a continuous – not homogeneous -trajectory between past, present and futur, recovering strategic collective experience. Opening-up the change, critical thinking, and a second time of reflection to create alternatives of activity.

The Origin of Violence at School (psycho-educational agents perspective)
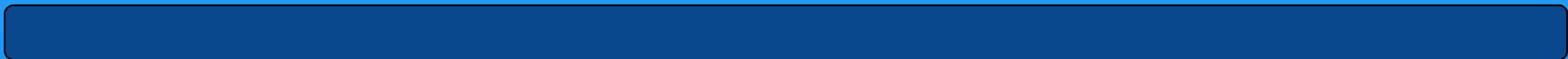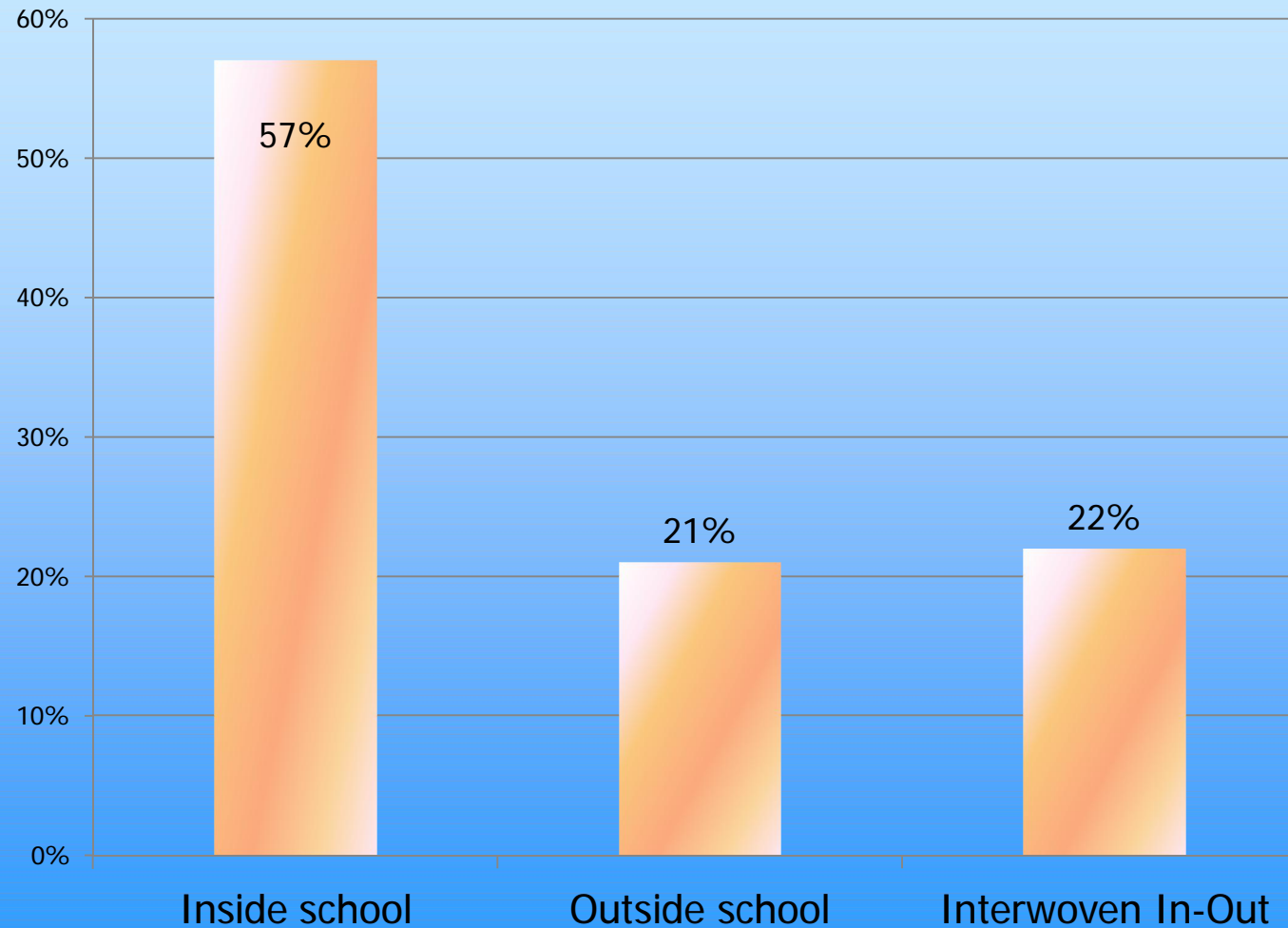
Links

- Psychologists narrations that situate the origin of violence at school in a complex Inter-woven In-Out (Cazden, 2010) strongly correlated to figures of Team Work and Consultation Work.

- Psychologists narrations that situate the origin of violence at school Out-School – in family or social problems inaccesible for school intervention - strongly correlated to figure of Encapsulated Work.

- There is more dispersion in Psychologists narrations that situate the origin of violence In-School in their correlation to figures of Encapsulated, Team and Consultation Work.

- For strategic Interventions, expanded to the futur, it seems to be necessary to work in teams or in collaborative consultation with other school social actors, and to re-mediate activity system memory, for learning through social experience and making possible important changes and alternative practices.

Conclusions

Working with reflection about situation-problems is a useful tool in expansive learning (Engeström),

that re-constructs the context of practice, discovering and criticizing, with the participation and genuine appropriation or construction of tools by social actors as protagonists.

The *participative appropriation* (Rogoff, 1997) of educational psychologists and their exchange of different senses and meanings develop new dimensions of knowledge, competence and professional identity in *communities of practice,* building artifacts through reflection about violence situated in each context.

The Questionnaire introduced as a data collection tool has become an Instrument of Reflection on the Practice with Violence Situation Problems for Psychologists in Educational Settings.

OPENING NEW DIRECTIONS OF RESEARCH

- New research directions are being opened, using *Matrix of Complex Analysis of Expansive Learning* (Engeström, 2001) for answering who, what, how and why are learning while working in educational contexts, linked with five principles of Third Generation of Activity Theory (Engeström, 2001).

Matrix of Complex Analysis for Expansive Learning					
	Two activity systems as unit of analysis	Multi-voicedness	Historicity	Contradictions	Expansive cycle
Who are learning ?					
Why ...					
What ...					
How ...					

We learn to work working, although we don't know at the beginning how to do it. (Vygotsky, 1924)

Who learn have a chance to build how to do something with others. While they find out how their role can be, they follow one of many ways, *including one that there isn't yet there, one that they have to learn while they construct it.* (Engestrom, 1991)

Thank you!

Prof. Cristina Erausquin

cristinaerausquin@yahoo.com.ar