To *Behave* or not to *Behave*?

**Evaluation of *Behave,* a programme for secondary school pupils
to develop a code of conduct for their class**

Summary

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Rationale

For the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Ministry of Justice PLATO (Centre for Research on Education and Training) of Leiden University has carried out an evaluation of the process and the effects of the programme *Behave*. This intervention programme for pupils from the lower classes of secondary school (12-15 years) was developed with financial support from the Ministry of Justice, by the organisation Codename Future.

The goal of *Behave* is to develop social competences and prosocial behavior in the lower classes of secondary schools (pupils from VMBO, Havo and VWO) to discourage undesirable behavior both inside and outside of the schools and, in the longer term, to realize a positive change in behavior.

Pupils are invited to draw up a code of conduct for their own group and/or school and to play an active role in the improvement of their surroundings. A first study of the potential effectiveness of the programme *Behave* was carried out in 2009 by the SCO-Kohnstamm Institute. It was concluded that in theory the programme contained a number of positive elements that could enhance the effectiveness of the programme, but the link between these theoretical principles and the practical implementation was lacking.

Research questions

The evaluation consists of four components:
- *Context evaluation*: In what context the programme has been carried out?
- *Process evaluation:* How and with whom the programme has been carried out?
- *Product evaluation:* What are the outcomes of *Behave* in these schools and with these pupils?
- *Assessment:* How can the quality and effectiveness of the programme be assessed?

Each main question is divided into several subquestions.

Data collection and data analysis

Data was collected using questionnaires for pupils, teachers and other school personnel, as well as interviews with managers. There were three measurements: before the implementation of *Behave*, and then one week and eight weeks after the programme had ended.

Other data collection methods were document analysis, interviews with staff members from Codename Future, and a meeting with representatives from participating schools. Several qualitative and quantitative (multilevel analysis) methods were used to analyse the data.

Results

Context evaluation: In what context the programme has been carried out?

The schools that took part in this study already had school rules and stated that behavior and making agreements on behavior are an essential part of school policy. This is expressed in conversations on the subject between staff members, reacting properly to undesirable behavior, teacher training, and projects like *Behave*.

Before the intervention the pupils regarded undesirable behavior as a problem, but did not feel that it always concerns them. In other words, pupils are concerned but not (yet) responsible. In the experience of the pupils the class and school climate are moderately to considerably positive. They are moderately contented with the way that pupils in their classes and schools interact. The contact between teachers/staff members and pupils, on both class and school level, is rated as considerably satisfactory.

Process evaluation: How and with whom the program has been carried out?
The programme *Behave* was implemented in 80 classes (1879 pupils) in 26 schools. The control group consisted of 32 classes (828 pupils). In most cases *Behave* was carried out in the first and second grade (86% of all classes) en more often in lower secondary professional education (VMBO, 71%) than in higher general secondary education or pre-university education (HAVO and VWO).

Several varieties of *Behave* were carried out. Most schools did a one day project or integrated the program in regular or mentor classes. A few schools organized a project week. The size of the project was limited (4-16 hours) and the duration varied from 1 day to 10 weeks.
In this study it remained unclear exactly which activities were carried out as part of the program. There are clear indications that the program was not carried out according to plan. Furthermore it does not meet the minimum standards of *Behave*. This leads to the suspicion that what was carried out in some schools was actually not *Behave*. The low program integrity probably had a negative impact on the effectiveness of the programme.

There seemed to be sufficient basis for the implementation of *Behave* in the schools among teachers, managers and other school personnel. However, in most schools the decision to participate in the program was made by a select group. De respondents indicated before the start of *Behave* that teacher and pupil commitment, a good practical organisation and logistics, and a broad implementation would be important conditions for success. In retrospect they stated that these conditions were met moderately to considerably well. The findings of this study do not always match this positive experience.

Codename Future offered a special teacher training as part of the program for all involved teachers. Teachers and managers rated this training as moderately to considerably useful. In a few schools the organisation and logistics from Codename Future were said to be lacking in quality.

On average pupils find it important that in their schools attention is being paid to the subject matter of conduct and rules/codes of conduct. Nonetheless they were only moderately motivated during the activities of *Behave*. They rated the program overall as moderately enjoyable en informative. Over time these scores decreased.

Teachers and managers are respectively moderately and considerably satisfied with the way the program was carried out. Both groups were considerably positive about the content of *Behave*. Unlike the students rating, the scores of teachers and managers increased with time, but these increases were not statistically significant.

Product evaluation: What are the outcomes of Behave in these schools and with these pupils?

In 25 out of 26 schools a code of conduct was made and recorded on paper. In one school this remained unclear. The pupils considered their own codes of conduct as moderately useful, but nonetheless found it important that everyone in the class should comply with them. In the course of time these scores decreased a little.

On average the codes of conduct do not meet the quality standards. They were not always about concrete behavior and in most cases no arrangements were made about their enforcement. Furthermore little attention was paid to the creation of social support for the codes within the schools and their long-term impact. Neither the code nor the programme *Behave* was frequently discussed in the classrooms on a regular basis after the program had ended.

Behave aims to improve the social competencies of pupils. Social competencies consist of several aspects, like knowledge, attitude and concrete behavior. In this study the social competencies were measured with the Social Belief Test. Additionally a questionnaire was developed to measure changes in desirable and undesirable behavior, as well as pupils' reactions to observed undesirable behavior in others. Because *Behave* emphasizes awareness and not knowledge about behavior, this study did not encompass a knowledge test.

Any changes in pupils' social beliefs and concrete behavior should have positive repercussions on the quality of the class and school climate. For this purpose an adaptation of a questionnaire by Lickona and Davidson (2003) was used.

The results did not show any improvement in the social beliefs of the pupils, nor had their concrete behavior changed in a positive way. After the program had ended the pupils did not display more desirable or less undesirable behavior. The pupils also were not more inclined to act when confronted with undesirable behavior shown by others. Teachers, managers and other school personnel confirm this picture. According to them the pupils' behavior has hardly been changed by the program.

At the start of the study teachers and managers expected the program to have a positive impact on pupils' awareness. Changes in behavior were expected to be limited, if any. Their aims and goals also mostly related to awareness. In retrospect the managers concluded that their aims and goals had been moderately realised. This does not correspond to the fact that in this evaluation no effects have been found.

This study did not prove any positive changes in class or school climate. Pupils were moderately contented with the way that pupils interact with each other and considerably satisfied with the interaction between teachers/staff members and pupils, on both class and school level. There is clear evidence of a decline in scores over time, but no differences between the experimental group and the control group has been found. The evaluation results of the teachers match those of the pupils.

Assessment: How can the quality and effectiveness of the programme are assessed?
This study shows that *Behave* is often not executed in accordance with the plans and it does not meet the minimum quality standards of the program. It should be noted however that the program itself offers only global guidelines about what should be carried out. There are no didactical and pedagogical guidelines about how tot guide the pupils in specific learning situations. The low program integrity partly explains the fact that the goals of *Behave* are not realised in practice. The program hardly, if at all, contributes to the development of social competencies, social behavior, or class or school climate.

Although the design of the program includes some strong elements in the area of motivation, work forms, and flexibility, the researchers also observe many weak points. The program offers too much variation in the way it can be carried out and too little professional development of the teachers as well as too few didactical and pedagogical guidelines. For example, hardly any attention is being paid to the way in which teachers can guide the process of behavior change.
Furthermore *Behave* seems to be a rather isolated event instead of a continuous process. There are no signs of a broader approach throughout the whole school and increasing the impact receives, on average, too little attention. Last but not least the size and duration of the program are limited, which possibly decreases the possibility to realize effects.

If *Behave*, based on the findings of this study, will be developed further, PLATO has the following recommendations. First of all the program integrity should be drastically improved. To realise this the following measures could be taken:
- Clear demarcation of the (variations of the) program (aims, methods, activities).
- More focus on pedagogical and didactical skills for teachers that are necessary to coach the process of behavior change.

Other recommendations are to:
- increase the size and duration of the program;
- stimulate a broader approach throughout the school;
- pay explicit attention to the creation of social support and maximize impact. Preferably this should be an integral part of the program.

The schools that participated in this study agree that the subject matter of behavior is important, but are less sure if *Behave* is the best and most effective way to deal with this issue. More than half the schools claim to have plans to repeat *Behave* in the following year. On average these plans are considerably concrete. It can not be concluded that the goals of the program can be realised just by repeating it. For this a substantial development will be essential.