METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES OF RESEARCH ABOUT GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN UNIVERSITY

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Sharing some insights…

- …drawn from a research on gender based violence in and around schools in Western and Central Africa

- on-line discussion in French on research about GBV in and around schools in Africa in February

- main findings are being published in form of a « guide book »

- extension on gender based violence in universities (Benin)

Sharing some insights…

- More general reflexion on « measuring » and « making visible » gender based violence in school and elsewhere

- Why is « measurement » important ?

  => « only what's measured get's done! »

  => monitoring of trends and evolutions
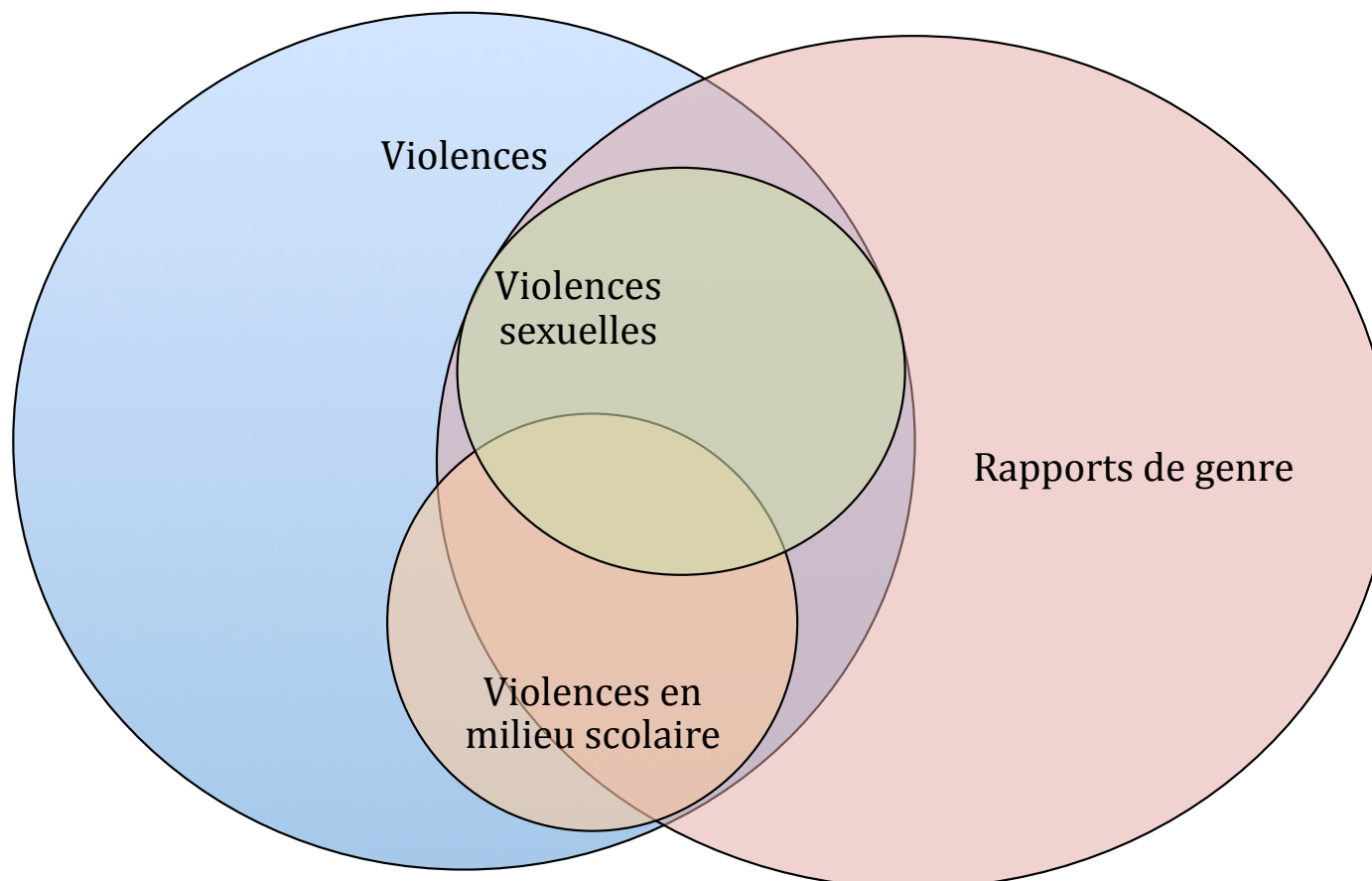
  => evaluation of measures to fight against GBV

How do you define gender based violence ?

Complexe issues of definition

Les violences de genre en milieu scolaire à l'intersection de plusieurs champs terminologiques

Violences

Violences
sexuelles

Rapports de genre

Violences en
milieu scolaire

Les violences de genre en milieu scolaire se situent à l'intersection des trois sphères « Violences », « Rapports de genre », et « Violences en milieu scolaire ». Une partie des violences de genre en milieu scolaire relève des violences sexuelles, les autres sont des violences physiques (autre que sexuelles) et des violences psychologiques (deux catégories non-représentées comme sphères spécifiques sur ce schéma).

Theoretical frameworks

- Different strands of research on violence against girls/women:

  - focus on acts and individuals,

  - focus on institutions and social relations,

  - focus on interactions.

Theoretical frameworks

- First strand on acts and individuals:

  - includes emotional and psychological harm, as well as physical violence

  - concerned with findings about the incidence and prevalence of acts of violence.

Theoretical frameworks

- Second strand on institutions and social relations:

  - concerned with gendered power structures of inequality

  - shifting the focus from acts of violence, and the individual perpetrators and victims, to a focus on institutions, and the ways in which institutions and social structures produce violence

  - implies a large definition of violence.

Theoretical frameworks

- Third strand on interactions:

  - looks at the ways in which violence is enacted within and through everyday relationship

  - concerned with the lived experience of violence, inequality and discrimination in universities (homes and communities…)

  - explores how young women understand and engage in social relationships, how violence enters into these relationships, and how young women resist violence

Theoretical frameworks

- Third strand on interactions:

  - examines the complex and diverse ways in which gendered identities are negotiated and struggled over

  - how men, parents and teachers may support womens' resistance

Theoretical frameworks

- Third strand on interactions in an African context:

  - gender based sexual violence ⇔ "transactional" and "transgenerational" sexuality

  - example Benin : focus on « sexual harassment »

  => the « author » can be a teacher or a student who is « harassing » a teacher

Theoretical frameworks

- Third strand on interactions in an African context:

  Raises ethical questions:

  - feminist value: control over ones' body, liberated sexuality

  - blurred boundary between consensual and coerced sex

  => young women might actively seek sex with older men as a way of gaining important material goods, money or favours

  => practices associated with scarcity of economic resources, a lack of power for women to negotiate their sexuality, and with aggression and physical force

Data collection

- Classical methods of quantitative data collection have a limited efficiency because :

  - low rates of reporting : victims who are traumatised do not want / cannot talk

  => how can trust be created ?

  => what can be done when violence is revealed ?

  - perception of violence is variable (ex. « flirting » ⇔ harassment ; humour ⇔ sexism)

  => analysis is necessary

Data collection

- Qualitative data collection is often not fully recognized as « evidence »

- Combination of data collection methods is necessary

  - quantitative and qualitative data

  - interesting results with artistic expression

  => boundary between data collection and therapy might be blurred

Data collection

- Due to the problems of definition, a combination of awareness raising can work well

  => action-research

- neutrality of the researcher ?

- feminist standpoint => criticism concerning validity of collected data and research outcomes

Conclusion

- Research on gender based violence is necessary to justify, feed into and to monitor/evaluate policy against gender based violence

- Complex issue demanding much precaution

- Combination of methods necessary, linked to awareness raising

- Research on gender based violence works best in a gender aware environment