Volume 2 of the thesis
submitted to:

The University of Birmingham
In part fulfillment for the degree of
Doctorate in Applied Child and Educational Psychology

By

Will Cross

School of Education
The University of Birmingham
July 2013

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Introductory Chapter: Chapter 1

A requirement for Doctorate in Applied Child and Educational Psychology at the University of Birmingham is to complete and submit a Thesis in two volumes. Volume one comprises half the Thesis and represents an original piece of research that was planned and agreed by the Educational Psychology Service I was employed in during my training in years 2 and 3 of the doctoral training.

This volume represents volume 2 and comprises four professional practice reports (PPRs) each addressing a broad domain of my applied psychological practice during years 2 and 3 of my training. Each PPR is constructed as a piece of small-scale research and follow the structure typically seen in published articles.

This introductory chapter is structured into different sections, the first section provides a contextual background and brief description of the Local Authority I trained in and how it has inevitably influenced my research foci. The following section provides a synopsis of the four individual PPRs and the final section focuses on my reflections as a practitioner psychologist and how these four small-scale pieces of research contributes to my personal professional practice and knowledge and theory in the field of Educational Psychology.

Contextual influences

During my training I was employed in the northern area of a large county service in the East Midlands, which had high proportions of socio-economic deprivation and disadvantage, including high levels of unemployment and mental health difficulties. It is an ethnically diverse locality, where 59% of the population are described as White (British, Irish or Other), 14% Black, 12% Asian and 15% other.

The Educational Psychology Service was divided into four locality based teams and each team consisted of eight full-time equivalent Educational Psychologists, who had their own allocation of schools and accessed regular supervision, training and team meetings. During my second and third year practice I had the responsibility for 12 and 23 settings respectively, varying from pre-school nurseries, primary schools, Children Centres. secondary schools, academies and special schools.

The Educational Psychology Service where I completed my training adopted a solution-focused consultation model of service delivery and advocated working in partnership with schools, and other settings/professionals to bring about positive change/difference at a number of levels, including, individual level with the young person, group or class level and organisational level within the whole school culture through joint problem solving, identification, assessment, formulation, intervention and evaluation.

Through the application of an interactionist perspective of formulation, at biological, environmental, cognitive, emotional and behavioural levels and the application of systemic, psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural and social psychology, I was able to engage in a eclectic range of casework and projects during my two years of training in this service, that contributed to supporting and advocating the rights of the young person at multiple levels. The following chapters detail this diverse work and are presented as four Professional Practice Reports in the following four chapters.

Chapter 2: Nurturing values: An evaluation of a Key Stage one Nurture Group

This chapter presents and discusses an evaluation of a Key Stage One Nurture Group that focused on eliciting the views of school staff, parents of children attending the facility and also the children accessing the Nurture Group to discover what difference and how effective this facility is to improving the children's social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs. This research was conducted with a view of developing and raising awareness of child-centred practice within Nurture Groups and also gathering the perspectives of those who are rarely asked about their experiences in such environments; namely the parents and children.

Chapter 3: Using Dynamic Assessment with Traveller children, implications for EP practice.

This chapter includes a Professional Practice Report that focuses on the ethical considerations of conducting assessment work with ethnic minorities with a specific focus on using Dynamic Assessment (DA) with Traveller children and the implications this may have for Educational Psychologist practice. The report is presented as an exploratory case study and details the implementation of using this tool during the process of gathering information for a Statutory Assessment with a Gypsy/Roma Traveller child.
The report considers DA as an additional and credible tool in the EP's assessment armoury that enables assessments to be individualised and maximises a young person's learning potential, in addition to actively promoting equal opportunities and anti-oppressive practice.
By considering and acknowledging the socio-cultural and linguistic implications of using static/psychometric and creating authentic learning experiences and reducing the barriers to learning by using DA as an alternative it is argued that this could be one way EP's demonstrate their distinctive contribution as scientist-practitioners.

Chapter 4: Should therapeutic work in schools be within the existing remit of EP practice? An exemplar using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

The PPR presented in this chapter explores the barriers and facilitators to EPs working therapeutically within their already broad remit and service delivery to schools.

Findings from a bespoke CBT group based intervention that was delivered in a secondary school is used as an exemplar to answer this question, where critical reflections from my own practice are used to explore the barriers and facilitators to working therapeutically in schools.

My reflections suggest that the barriers that exist to engaging in therapeutic work are capacity and time to read and plan the intervention and accessing appropriate and regular 'specialised' supervision. Conversely, the facilitators appeared to be EP's unique understanding of the underlying psychological concepts and constructs of the therapeutic approaches.

Further discussions centre on the implications of EP's working therapeutically.

Chapter 5: Nurturing Values: A Nurture Group's impact on whole-school nurturing practices.

This chapter focuses on an extended piece of research from chapter 2 that investigated staff's perceptions regarding a Nurture Group's impact on the school's wider nurturing practices. Taking the angle of the systemic influence a Nurture Group has is a largely under studied and investigated area, so this was an exciting opportunity to illuminate new information in this domain.

Reflections: Contributions to my personal professional development, knowledge and theory

Critically reflecting on and analysing my involvement investigating and documenting these small-scale pieces of research I feel that I have developed my repertoire of skills required to be a chartered Educational Psychologist. In particular, this experience has enabled me to work over a variety of levels, individual, small group and systemic and has broadened my knowledge of the psychological theory underpinning the eclectic work that Educational Psychologists conduct. In conducting the research I have had an opportunity to explore in depth, consultation, research, assessment, intervention that in some PPR cases have led to delivering training (PPR1, I delivered training to the school staff on Attachment Theory) and (PPR2 I presented DA to the Assessment and Monitoring officers); fundamental and core duties of an Educational Psychologist.

On a subjective level, each PPR within this volume has ethics, anti-oppressive practice and equal opportunities central to their aims; facets that run throughout my thinking to ensure I retain safe and effective practice.

Conducting these small-scale research projects have given me greater awareness of how I would like to develop as an EP and what areas I wish to

continue practicing and PPR 2's account of working with the Traveller population and using Dynamic Assessment are both areas that are of personal interest to me and ones that I wish to develop as a chartered Educational Psychologist. Moreover, I have had extensive experience of working in and applying the psychological theory underpinning Nurture groups and conducting research in these areas has been a personally rewarding journey.

I also hope that from conducting these small-scale pieces of research that the findings from this volume contribute to wider educational knowledge and praxis, and promote wider discussion and critical reflection amongst Educational Psychologists regarding their assessment work with ethnic minority groups and a greater acknowledgement of systemic nurturing practices, in particular PPR 2 and PPR 4 are largely understudied and/or researched areas and it is hoped that by sharing this research it generates interest for other EPs to engage in similar research.

Chapter 2: Nurturing values:
An evaluation of a Key Stage one nurture group for children described as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Abstract

This assignment presents and discusses an evaluation of a Key Stage one nurture group (NG) that was conducted to ascertain what difference the facility made to children's social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs. Data was gathered through questionnaires that were distributed to and completed by school staff (24), children attending the NG (8) and their parents (5), and augmented by Boxall Profile scores (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998). Findings from the evaluation indicate greater differences and improvements were reported in meeting the children's social and emotional needs than behaviour and learning. Implications for the removal of social, emotional and behavioural barriers to learning are discussed further and recommendations are made to developing nurturing practice.

The order of this assignment will be as follows: a brief introduction to NG's will be given, providing an overview on variants of nurturing practice and psychological theory underpinning this practice. There is then a critical review of literature in relation to the effectiveness of NG's. The present study is introduced which includes a pen portrait of the participating provision, its demographics and rationale for conducting the research. The chosen methodology is introduced and findings are explored and presented. Finally the paper ends with a discussion of how the findings from this study relate to previous empirical research into NG's.

Introduction

In 1999 it was estimated that between 10 – 20% of all school age children in the United Kingdom experience social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) to a significant degree at any time (Young Minds, 1999). The terminology used to describe this cohort has changed over the years, from maladjusted, emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) to SEBD. I have chosen to use the term SEBD, as I feel it reflects how the child's difficulties are presented; acknowledging the interplay of environmental and within factors. Findings from research suggest, the implications of experiencing SEBD can act as a barrier to the learning process for both those exhibiting the behaviour and other children in proximity of such difficulties (Cooper, 1999). SEBD can therefore lead to a child becoming `at risk` of underachievement (Bomber, 2007) or exclusion (Bennathan and Boxall, 1996).

Since the 1981 Education Act (HMSO), SEBD's have been viewed as a Special Educational Need (SEN), especially where it is accepted that the child has a significantly greater difficulty in accessing the curriculum than the majority of children of the same age. (DfE, 1994). In 2001 the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published a paper entitled Inclusive Schooling: Children with SEN. The paper recommended that schools should attempt to address the needs of all children regardless of their SEN (DfES, 2001), implying that schools should adapt their provision to meet the needs of its children; a sentiment that has its roots in the United Nations Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994).

One way of meeting the needs of pupils with SEBD is through a provision, which actively seeks to reduce the incidence and impact of the related difficulties they may experience. One such environment that provides these opportunities is the nurture group (NG).

Nurture groups have received positive recognition in government policy, such as Excellence for All (DfEE, 1997). An Ofsted report in 2006 described NGs as having proved effective in helping young children to "improve their concentration, behaviour and ability to learn" (P.14) and recent reports written by Sir Alan Steer (DfES, 2008 and 2009) have acknowledged the positive impact of NGs on helping children to overcome obstacles to emotional development and promoting `good` behaviour.

NGs are an alternative form of educational provision located within mainstream schools that function as a withdrawal facility with their own designated space or room. They have been described as offering specialist support (Colley, 2009), as an early intervention (Doyle, 2001) and as providing a means of educational attachment (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007) for those children whose SEB and learning difficulties would not be met in the mainstream classroom.

Many of the children who attend NGs have become what Bomber (2007) terms `stuck developmentally` and accessing a NG enables many to become 'unstuck', providing them with an opportunity to access what Winnicott (1965, in Bomber, 2007) referred to as `second-chance learning'. `Second-chance learning' involves providing the child with opportunities to access experiences that were missed or unmet during an earlier developmental period. In the NG this is achieved through NG staff modelling and replicating the parent-child relationship through the provision of a predictable, reliable, trusting, caring and supportive environment in which the children can feel safe enough to take risks, explore and learn. (Boxall, (2002) and Cooper and Lovey, (1999).

According to Cooper and Tiknaz (2005, p.211) NG's serve two central aims:

1) To provide children with an environment to facilitate social, emotional, behavioural and cognitive development;
2) To remove any barriers in relation to those factors (SEBD and learning) in order to prepare children for functioning constructively in mainstream schooling.

Attendance at a NG can therefore, be seen as providing a `bridge' to permanent and full-time placement in mainstream classrooms (Cooper, in Hunter-Carsch et al, 2006), where NGs provide positive and reparative experiences, which facilitate the likelihood that children will engage with school and their learning.

NGs were originally conceptualised by Marjorie Boxall, an Educational Psychologist (EP) in 1969. They were formed in response to a significant rise in children with SEBD entering mainstream primary schools and referrals for exclusions (Bennathan and Boxall, 1996). Many of the children entering school at this time were without the prerequisite social and emotional skills necessary to cope with formal education. Therefore, schools adjusted to meet the needs of these children through the formulation of NGs.

NGs have typically taken the guise of what has become known as a `classic' model (Cooper et al., 2001), which has the following key principles:

- Is a small supportive class of up to 12 children and usually based in a mainstream school
- Provides a secure, predictable environment where the different developmental needs of each pupil are catered for

- Is staffed by two adults, usually a teacher and Teaching Assistant, and pupils attend regularly for a substantial part of each week (up to 4 ½ days)
- The ethos focuses on emotional and social growth and development as well as academic progress
- Ensures pupils remain on their mainstream class roll with the expectation that they will return to their class in 2 – 4 terms.

(Adapted from the NG Network, 2010)

However, findings from a national survey into NG practice by Cooper et al in 2001 indicated that there are four variants of NGs.

Variant 1: Classic Boxall (Bennathan and Boxall, 1996) as described above

Variant 2: Those that differ in structure, i.e. part-time, but adhere to the key principles of the classic approach

Variant 3: Groups that call themselves NG s but do not conform to the Boxall principles, and

Variant 4: Groups which call themselves NGs but which distort or undermine the key principles of the classic model.

The psychological underpinnings to Nurture group practice

NGs that adhere to the key principles of the 'classic' approaches are heavily rooted in a number of psychological theories (Lucas, 1999). The most prominent of which is attachment theory (Bowlby, 1958, 1969, 1973 and 1980).

Bowlby argued that babies and young children are biologically predisposed to seek proximity to their primary caregivers for warmth and protection. The adult, typically the

mother, acts as a secure base in which the child can function and develop. According to Bowlby, developing an emotional and social bond between parent and child is essential for the maintenance of a secure attachment (Bowlby, 1969). The quality of the adult-child relationship is important as it affords the securely attached child the opportunity to accept and cope with disruption to, and separation within the relationship.

Bowlby's work has been further developed by Ainsworth and Wittig (1969) who used attachment theory as a framework (Slater, 2007). Ainsworth and Wittig (1969) studied the quality of attachments between the carer and child, and predicted that children, whose carers are sensitive and responsive to their needs in the early years, are likely to develop a secure attachment. Through studying carer-to-child interactions Ainsworth and Wittig (1969) proposed that there were 3 different attachment types: securely attached; anxious-avoidant and ambivalent-resistant. In 1990, Main and Solomon identified a fourth attachment type; disorganised-disorientated. It is however, beyond the scope of this study to investigate or provide a thorough analysis of the different attachment typologies.

The value of applying attachment theory to assist the understanding of NG practice is that children who are allocated a place in the NG are seen as those children who have missed out on the early experiences that lead to a secure attachment, for example, warm, caring and consistent parenting, where reciprocity and attunement are common place. As a consequence many children attending a NG arrive at school without their attachment needs being fulfilled and display inappropriate behaviours that correspond to Bowlby's (1980) account of attachment disorders such as: difficulties engaging in productive social

interaction, displaying withdrawn, avoidant or aggressive behaviour and the inability to sustain attention in novel (learning) situations.

The NGs function as a `bridge` to enable children to access mainstream schooling and this is achieved through providing an environment and relationship that can help develop a secure attachment to their education (Geddes, 2007). The NG environment has features of a safe and caring family home, with soft furnishings and cooking facilities. There is an emphasis on food and part of the routine is sharing breakfast as a group, which provides a forum for social interaction. Attachment theory therefore helps to construct a NG as a secure base in which children can function and develop emotionally, socially and cognitively (Geddes, 2007). Moreover, for children attending a NG, an attachment to education is also provided indirectly through developing trusting and caring relationships with the NG staff. This relationship has been found to have a positive influence on academic achievement (MacKay et al, 2010) and behaviour (Boorn et al, 2010). NG staff model positive social interaction and cooperation that supports the children to practise and learn pro-social skills. The nurture staff provide a predictable routine, where there are consistent rules and expectations and rewards, responsibility, consequences and choices are made explicit; which in turn provide security for the children.

Research into attachment has demonstrated that those children who experience secure attachments achieve greater academic success than insecurely attached children, (Levy and Orlans, 1998). Insecurely attached children are said to have difficulties with their learning as they are unable to concentrate fully (Bomber, 2007) as their mind is focused on repelling the feelings of insecurity, and they are preoccupied with unresolved

attachment difficulties (Ayers et al, 2000, p.55). According to Crittenden (1992, p.580) when caregivers are attuned to their children's needs, the children are freed from the disorganising effects of intense emotional arousal and are able to explore their world.

Bowlby (1969) proposed that from an early age, children develop an Internal Working Model based on their relationships with their primary caregivers. The Internal Working Model according to Bowlby comprise cognitive structures which are constructed through child-carer interactions; the more positive the interaction, the more positive thinking style a child will have and therefore more likely to form a secure attachment. NGs can be seen as an intervention that seeks to modify negative Internal Working Models, through allowing children access to positive experiences in a caring and secure base; which enables the children to value themselves through their experiences of being valued by others (Cooper and Lovey, 1999).

However, Bowlby's theory has received criticism on a number of counts. The concept of the Internal Working Model has been described by Dunn (1993), as being vaguely conceived. Furthermore, Slater (2007) has questioned the exact nature of how the Internal Working Model helps to ameliorate a child's disadvantages. There is an understanding that cognitive or thinking skills play a role in helping change to occur, however, individual differences such as personality and a child's distinctive environmental factors are overlooked.

Bowlby (1958, 1969, 1973 and 1980) and Ainsworth and Wittig (1969) suggest the attachment between child and carer is innate/biologically predisposed and universally

applicable across cultures. However, there is evidence to contradict their propositions, Van Ijzendoorn and Krooneberg (1988) found variance in the patterns of interaction, which contributed to secure, and insecure attachments across cultures. Suggesting that social-cultural influences and norms also play a role in shaping attachment behaviours. Therefore, attachment theory appears to overlook wider relationships the child has exposure to beyond the immediate family, such as those theorised by Bronfenbrenner (1979).

Moreover, Bowlby's (1969) claims that negative early experiences predict later poor outcomes, overlooks the possibility that positive interventions, such as those delivered by a nurture group will make little, if any positive difference; and as such gives little hope for the future for this cohort of children (Slater, 2007). This inflexible and deterministic perspective also overlooks a life-span viewpoint that acknowledges individual differences and experiences, such as possessing resiliency to overcome difficulties. Bowlby's theory has also been criticised on the basis that the underpinnings of attachment are rooted in animal studies and therefore, its applicability to humans has been questioned (Fonagy, 2001).

Nurture group effectiveness

Evaluative research conducted on NGs has indicated positive effects in terms of meeting children's social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs. A longitudinal study conducted by Cooper et al (2001) investigated the effectiveness of NGs in 25 schools where children attending NGs were compared to children with and without SEBD but attending mainstream school. Findings indicate that children attending the NG made

greater improvements than the comparative sample in emotional and behavioural functioning on measures such as the strength and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997, 1999) and the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998). Further findings extracted from questionnaires indicated that school staff reported progress in children's educational attainment in English, Maths and Science National Curriculum scores. Findings from the majority of parents suggested there were positive effects on their child's behaviour and enjoyment of school, although there were some reports that their children's academic achievement had lowered since attending the nurture group, suggesting, meeting the academic needs of children is not a priority within NG's. Findings gathered from children attending the NG highlighted social and emotional benefits from forging positive relationships with the NG staff.

Cooper and Whitebread (2007) found significant improvements in NG pupils in terms of social, emotional and behavioural functioning from SDQ and Boxall Profile pre and post scores. The study also found support to suggest meeting social and emotional needs first enables academic progression, as social and emotional improvements were evidenced in the first two terms children attended the NG and gains in cognitive engagement were seen to improve in terms three and four.

Further evidence from Binnie and Allen (2008) who evaluated six part-time NG's found improvements in teacher and parent perceptions of children's behaviour, confidence and academic progress. In the evaluation of nurturing practice in three schools, Sanders (2007) elicited school staff, parents' and child views through questionnaires and found two thirds of teachers perceived children who had attended a NG to be better motivated to

complete academic tasks and work independently on their return to the mainstream class. Further improvements were recorded in social interaction with peers and improved confidence as a learner. Parents reported seeing an increase in their child's confidence levels, whereas NG children reported making more friendships.

Through the analysis of data collected from three case studies and staff questionnaires Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) found that staff viewed the NG as having a significant contribution to the progress in children's social, emotional and behavioural development. However, similar gains were not evidenced in educational progress due to poor liaison between NG and mainstream staff.

There are further indicators from research that NGs lead to improved social and emotional outcomes for children. From the evaluation of five part-time `classic' NGs, Scott and Lee (2009) found that children made significant improvements in Boxall profile scores when compared to mainstream children. Scott and Lee (2009) also concluded, the younger the pupil accessed a NG, the more the social and emotional gains were evidenced. Further research evaluating NG practice has evidenced positive outcomes for children in self-management (Cooper and Lovey, 1999); social skills (Doyle, 2001); confidence (Boorn, 2002) and self-esteem (Colwell and O'Connor, 2003) when compared to mainstream controls.

A theme throughout the NG literature relates to how improvements that are evidenced in social, emotional and behavioural development enable further improvements in learning to occur. Reynolds et al (2009) found through addressing emotional and behavioural

difficulties in vulnerable children, quantitative gains in academic achievement were made. More recently Seth-Smith et al (2010) found academic gains for 89 children in 10 NGs and MacKay et al (2010) found a clear link between attachment, academic achievement and impact of NGs; suggesting that NGs directly address key attachment issues and that by doing so they have a beneficial impact on academic achievement MacKay et al (2010, p106).

However, NGs are not without their critics. Howes et al (2003) have questioned the 'social cost' of the children attending a NG in being separated from their friends in mainstream classes. Furthermore, there are ethical implications in reintegrating children from a NG back into mainstream classes, as this reintegration process can be viewed as yet another loss for the vulnerable child through ending and separating the temporary attachment made with the nurture group staff.

Further criticism has been documented on the long-term benefits of nurture groups. O'Connor and Colwell (2002) found a relapse in emotional and social functioning on the Boxall Profile for children who had left the NG after two years, indicating that the NG may only provide temporary alleviation of social and emotional difficulties, an idea that also supports Bowlby's (1969) view that early negative experiences continue to cause later difficulties.

The present study:

The present study is an evaluation of a part-time, Key Stage one NG. The cohort had started in the NG in June 2010. The NG corresponds to the second variant of the classic "Boxall" model as described by Cooper et al (2001), where the "core principles" are still

practised, albeit on a concentrated level. The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of the nurture group in meeting the social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs of the pupils attending the facility according to multi-sample perceptions.

The Nurture group: A pen portrait

The NG discussed in this research provided provision for the most vulnerable children in the school at Key Stage One, including those who had experienced bereavement, loss and/or separation from a carer. The criteria for entry are determined by the completion of a Boxall Profile. The Boxall Profile is a detailed normative, diagnostic instrument (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) used to measure a child's level of behavioural and emotional functioning. The profile consists of two parts; the developmental strand which records the child's ability to engage with the learning process and the diagnostic profile which records behavioural characteristics of the child which may interfere with the child's social or academic performance (Cooper et al, 2001). The overarching purpose of the NG, according to the Nurture Teacher is to offer the children a "secure base with consistent rules, routine and people."

The school currently runs three part-time NG s as depicted in Table 1. This study focuses primarily on the key stage one cohort because it was the closest match to the "classic Boxall" NG model.

Group	*Provision provided*	*Number and age of children*
Group 1 (This study)	Monday to Thursday mornings	9 x Key stage one children (8 year one and one year two)
Group 2	Tuesday afternoon	10 x Years 3 & 4
Group 3	Wednesday & Thursday afternoons	8 x years 5 & 6

Table 1: Summary of the groups attending three NG s.

All children that attend the NG maintain links with their mainstream classes. Whilst in the NG the children access a curriculum that focuses on promoting social and emotional well-being and growth, through activities such as circle time (Mosley, 1993) and learning through adult-led and modelled reciprocal play and discussion. The structure to each day remains the same to ensure there is an element of predictability, which helps the children feel secure through knowing the routine and expectations.

Table 2: Structure of the Key stage one NG

Time	*Activity*
9:00	Welcome, register, singing welcome songs, calendar & describe weather
9:30	Talk-time and circle time
10:00	Breakfast
10:30	Shared play
10:45	Break: children join mainstream children for break
11:00	Group reconvenes, reading with adults or choice of play
11:30	Golden time: free play
12:00	Children go to lunch and then spend afternoon with their mainstream classes

Demographics of the school and its locality

The NG is located within a mainstream primary school in a densely populated urban district in the East Midlands. The school serves a community in which levels of social and economic disadvantage are high. A recent OfSTED report (2008) describes the school's pastoral care for those who are most vulnerable, have emotional difficulties or have suffered early trauma in their lives, as "Outstanding." The OfSTED report also gives recognition to the NG, which was described as "a very good nurturing provision." However, one area that was recommended as a need for improvement in the NG from the OfSTED report were the methods of evaluating and recording the difference it was making to the children attending the facility.

The school is proactive in promoting a whole-school nurturing philosophy through the delivery of a number of nurturing and creative interventions such as Philosophy for Children (Lipman and Ward-Bynam, 1976) and Theraplay (Booth and Jernberg, 2010).

Rationale for the present study

The present study developed as the result of a meeting between the researcher, a Trainee Educational Psychologist and the school's link Educational Psychologist, (EP). The link EP had received a request from the school to help monitor and evaluate certain distinct areas of work the school undertook. One of these areas was to evaluate some aspect of their NG facility. The evaluation was also motivated by the school's OfSTED inspection, which had highlighted this as an area where improvements could be made. As a result of this initial meeting, the link EP introduced the Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) to the school and a visit was then arranged to speak to the staff in the NG to clarify the focus of the evaluation. From this first meeting it emerged that the only evaluation of the NG the school conducted were termly Boxall profiling (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998).

It also became clear that the NG staff were unsure of the precise direction that the evaluation could take and needed support to extrapolate a meaningful focus. Therefore, an additional meeting was arranged with the Head Teacher to agree the focus of the evaluation, the stakeholders in the research and possible methodology.

Research aims

As a result of the meeting with the Head Teacher, two research aims became clear:

1). To explore the impact of the NG at individual level; on those children attending the provision, in terms of making a difference to their social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs

2). To gather information from a variety of sources connected to the NG, including mainstream staff, the children attending the NG and parental views; to help explore perceptions about the NG 's effectiveness in meeting the children's needs.

Research questions

From these two aims the following question was used as the focus of the research:

- What difference and improvements does the NG make to the children attending the provision, according to staff, parent and child views?

This question was assessed in the domains of social, emotional, behaviour and learning.

Methodology

Participants and sampling

The participants were chosen as they were in some way connected to the NG.

The sample consisted of 8 key stage one pupils, (4 girls and 4 boys), and the sample children's parents (8). Additionally, 24 members of the school staff participated in the study.

Measures and Procedure

The study was conducted over a three-month period. During this period the TEP visited the NG on five separate occasions. The purpose of these visits was to gain a greater understanding of the facility's NG practice and philosophy. These visits included an initial visit to meet staff, observe the NG and gather some background information on how the NG was managed. A further visit enabled the researcher to build a rapport with the children and staff in the NG through activities such as: cooking, free play, singing sessions and attending breakfast.

From a further visit to the NG the data collection tools were devised. The chosen method of collecting data was through the use of questionnaires, where three separate questionnaires were developed, (one each for pupils, parents and staff). The TEP decided to use questionnaires as a method of data collection due to the time constraints they were working under. Using questionnaires are quick to administer and analyse and also are effective in retaining participant confidentiality (Robson, 2002, p.233). These questionnaires were developed with the characteristics of a NG in mind (The NG Network, 2010) and from the themes that emerged in contemporary research into NG practice across the domains of children's social needs, (Sanders, 2007), emotional needs, (Boorn et al, 2010) behavioural needs, (Binnie and Allen, 2009) and impact on learning, (Scott and Lee, 2009; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Reynolds et al, 2009 and Seth-Smith et al, 2010).

The questionnaires comprised a mixture of closed questions, that required a YES, NO or PARTIALLY response. In addition to structured questions using scales developed by Likert

(1932) and other rating scales that required a response to be given on a scale of 1 to 10, (see appendices). Rating scales were chosen as they can be administered quickly and responses can easily be coded, (Thomas, 2009). Furthermore, rating scales were seen as a suitable method as they are a simple and straightforward approach to study and analyse beliefs (Robson, 2002, p.233); something each questionnaire attempted to measure in this research.

Parent and child questionnaires

These questionnaires focused specifically on what difference and improvement the NG made to the children attending the facility. Both questionnaires were distributed to parents of each child attending the NG and accompanied by a letter that explained the purpose of the study and also highlighted the ethical considerations as stipulated by The British Psychological Society (BPS) (2006). This letter also formed the basis of the parental consent. (See appendix 1).

Furthermore, prior to conducting the research, the rights of the children participating in the study were also made explicit. The TEP ensured the children had an appropriate level of participation in the study. Each child was informed and made aware of the purpose and implications of the research at an age-appropriate level. All children were consulted and informed about their participation and right to withdraw, ensuring it was abundantly clear they had a choice in participation, or were 'true volunteers' as described by Grieg, Taylor and MacKay (2007). Therefore, the participating children gave informed assent after an explanation of the study and prior to completing the questionnaires. Each child appeared to understand their role within the study and what they had to do to participate or opt out, as one child decided that they did not wish to participate.

The parents' questionnaire contained five questions, four of which focused on whether they agreed or disagreed that their child's behaviour, learning, social skills and emotional development had improved since their inclusion to the NG. (See appendix 2).

The questionnaire was devised to elicit the children's responses and contained five Likert scale questions relating to how the NG had helped them to feel different about their behaviour, learning, feelings and making friends (social) and replicated the domains listed in the parental questionnaires. Each question included a series of facial expressions to denote what the responses implied and also to help the children understand the scale of moving from a strong disagreement (unhappy face) to a strong agreement (happy face), (See appendix 3).

School staff questionnaire

The staff questionnaire was also accompanied by a letter that explained the purpose of the study and also highlighted the ethical considerations. (See appendix 4).

The questionnaire focused directly on how the children attending the NG had benefited from their inclusion in the NG, and focused on similar domains to those in the parental and child questionnaires, such as social, emotional, behavioural and learning. Each questionnaire included instructions of how they were to be completed, who to return them to and the date to return them by (See appendix 5).

Procedure

After parental consent had been gained, the TEP visited the school to individually introduce and explain the questionnaire to each of the participating children. This explanation was given due to the children's age (between 5 and 6) and to ensure they understood what they were being asked to do. Furthermore, the TEP also explained the rating scale and how they were required to respond the questions, to ensure they understood that an 'unhappy' face equalled disagreement and 'happy' face equalled agreement, etc. Each child completed their questionnaire in a distraction-free room in the school.

Responses from parents and school staff took considerably longer to gather and two weeks after the initial distribution stage reminders were circulated to ensure responses were completed and returned. A further two weeks elapsed and 5 completed parental questionnaires had been returned. The TEP arranged a focus group as an opportunity to meet parents and gather more responses. However, the parents were reluctant to engage and the focus group never materialised; so no further parental responses were received. During a final visit to the school, 24 completed school staff questionnaires were collected. During the same visit the researcher collected data relating to Boxall profiling (see appendix 6).

Findings

Findings are presented in respect of the NG's impact on the children attending the facility, according to parents, pupil and school staff perceptions and augmented by Boxall Profiling data.

Parental responses

Table 3 illustrates the findings from 5 parents who participated in the study. Their responses were given in relation to whether they agreed/disagreed that they had seen improvements in their child since their inclusion to the NG. The findings also demonstrated that one parent who strongly disagreed that their child's behaviour had improved, also noted that their child had become more disobedient since their inclusion to the NG.

Question: Improvements have been seen in your child's:	**Strongly disagree**	**disagree**	**Neither agree or disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
1) Behaviour	1	2		2	
2) Learning			2	2	1
3) Social skills			4	1	
4) Emotions		1	3	1	

Table 3: Parental responses (see appendix 2 for full questions)

Findings for question 5 which requested parents to complete a scaling question to rate the overall effectiveness of the NG on a scale of 1 to 10, (where 1 means not effective and 10 means extremely effective in meeting their child's needs) indicated that 2 parents chose 6, and the 3 remaining parents chosen a 7, 8 and 9. One of the parents, who rated the NG a 6, did stipulate that their child had been more motivated to go to school since their inclusion to the group.

Pupil responses

The findings obtained from the 8 pupils in this study indicate most pupils strongly agreed that the NG had helped them to feel different about coming to school, their feelings and also socialising and making friends. However, there was less agreement from pupils in relation to the NG helping them to feel different about their behaviour and learning.

Question: The NG has helped me to feel different about:	Strongly disagree	disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1) Coming to school			2		6
2) My behaviour			5	1	2
3) My learning	2	1	2	1	2
4) My feelings		1	2		5
5) Making friends			1	1	6

Table 4: Pupil responses (see appendix 3 for full questions)

School staff responses

The findings collected from 24 school staff indicate that the majority of staff perceived the NG to be beneficial to the pupil in terms of improving confidence, emotional safety and security.

Question: Children attending the NG have displayed Improvements and progress in:	Strongly disagree	disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1) Their confidence			2	7	15
2) Their learning	1	1	7	5	10
3) Their emotions				4	20
4) Their behaviour			1	12	11
5) Their social skills			4	6	14

Table 5: Staff responses in relation to impact on pupil attending the NG (See appendix 5 for full questions).

Further qualitative data from staff responses

Some of the staff elaborated on their answers and donated additional responses, these included:

In response to question two regarding pupils' improvements in their learning one staff member had seen improved "*confidence in reading and wanting to read*." Moreover,

further responses indicated that some staff suggested that children attending the NG did benefit academically in the short-term and "*could only benefit academically after their social and emotional needs had been met first*."

Some staff suggested that it was difficult to say whether the NG could have contributed to improvements in the pupils' behaviour "*as nurture is only one variable and other interventions exist in the school that help promote positive behaviour, such as after school clubs.*" However, another member of staff suggested that the NG pupils often became role models and shared calming strategies with their mainstream classmates.

Boxall Profile comparisons

Comparative Boxall Profile data collected by the children's Class Teacher was used to assess any changes that had occurred over a 5-month period from June 2010 to November 2010 for 7 of the 8 pupils. Analysis of the Boxall scores indicate most of the children's scores show negative differences were recorded over both the developmental strand and diagnostic profile with the exception of minimal gains recorded for 3 of the 7 children. These gains were evidenced in the `participates constructively` subscale (b), which includes listening and showing an interest in other children's views. The same 3 children also recorded gains on `shows insightful involvement`, subscale (d), which includes making reciprocal friendships. Most gains were evidenced in the `self-negating behaviour`, subscale (r), which indicate reductions in self-demeaning and avoidance behaviours. Most negative gains were evidenced in subscale (g) `is biddable and accepts constraints`, which includes following adult instructions and working and playing cooperatively with others. Furthermore, negative differences were evidenced in subscale (t), where all 7 children regressed in `shows inconsequential behaviour`, which includes

making inappropriate noises or remarks and being restless and erratic. Overall, the changes observed on the Boxall Profile scores are disappointing.

The findings from this comparison are evidenced in table 6 below green indicates no change in comparison scores, blue indicates the amount of negative difference and yellow the amount of positive difference according to teacher perceptions on the Boxall Profile.

	*Developmental strand											*Diagnostic profile									
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j		q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
Child																					
1	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	1		-	1	-	6	3	2	-	-	2	2
2	1	-	-	-	-	3	1	5	-	-		2	2	6	5	1	7	5	2	7	3
3	6	2	3	2	2	3	5	10	1	1		8	5	4	6	-	14	2	8	7	3
4	6	4	2	3	1	4	5	8	1	1		8	8	4	7	3	11	6	7	3	2
5	2	2	2	6	2	1	2	2	2	-		2	2	3	3	3	2	-	-	2	-
6	7	2	-	2	3	5	4	10	3	1		10	-	11	8	-	8	1	7	9	5
7	1	2	-	4	-	-	1	3	-	-		1	5	8	10	4	5	3	2	3	3

(See appendix 6 for areas measured in the sub-strands a – j and q – z)*

Table 6: Comparisons of Boxall profile data for 7 children over a 5-month period of attending the NG.

Key

- ☐ = No change
- ☐ = Amount of positive difference
- ☐ = Amount of negative difference

Discussion

The overall findings from this small-scale evaluation study indicated that greater differences and improvements in meeting children's social and emotional needs were reported than those in behaviour and learning from children attending a nurture group over a 5 month period. These findings support those found by Cooper and Whitebread

(2007) which suggest improvements in nurture group children's social and emotional needs occur first and improvements in behaviour and learning follow.

Findings gathered from parental responses suggest that improvements were reported in the following order: social skills, learning, emotion and the least reported improvement was in the child's behaviour, where 3 of the 5 parents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had observed any improvements since their child's inclusion to the NG. 2 of the 5 parents agreed that they had seen improvements in their child's learning since their inclusion to the NG. 1 parent reported an improvement in social and emotional improvement. However, the majority of parental responses for social and emotional improvements were scored 3 (neither agree, or disagree); implying there had been no discernable or noticeable differences in these areas. Findings also indicate that parents held a positive perception of the nurture groups overall effectiveness in meeting their child's needs; a similar finding to that found by O'Connor and Colwell (2002).

Findings gathered from pupils attending the NG signify that the NG had helped them to feel different in the following order: making friends (social), going to school, their feelings, their behaviour and least of all their learning. These findings provide evidence that children attending the NG feel a sense of belonging through making friends (Sanders, 2007) and these social relationships help children to make an attachment to the school (Doyle, 2001 and Cooper et al, 2001).

Staff responses indicated improvements were reported in the following order: emotional (feeling safe and secure), confidence, social/behaviour and progress in learning was

reported as the least improvement seen. These findings provide evidence that NGs assist children to feel emotionally safe and secure through the provision of a secure base (Boxall, 2002).

Findings from Boxall Profile data suggest since attending the NG the majority of children showed regressions on the Developmental Strands and increased difficulties on the Diagnostic Profile. Although there were some positive gains recorded that support the findings from questionnaire responses that the children attending the NG value the friendships they have made with other children in the NG. However, the regressions over the developmental strand and diagnostic profile indicate that children still found it difficult to follow adult instructions, work and play cooperatively with their peers, and showed more restless and erratic behaviour despite the predictable routine of the facility. These findings may reflect the underlying social and emotional difficulties that still exist after 5 months of attending the NG, and if so fully support the research evidence found by Cooper and Whitebread (2007) that for positive changes to be seen there is a need a long-term attendance in a NG. Furthermore, the findings may also reflect the children's reduced access to the NG facility due to the summer holidays, and the change in NG staff thus not reflecting previous findings from 'classic' Boxall models such as Cooper et al, (2001).

The findings generally are of no surprise, as NGs are an intervention designed to ameliorate social and emotional difficulties, and participants in this study reported greater differences/improvements in social and emotional domains as a result of children attending the NG. These findings therefore support those documented in literature

(Sanders, 2007) and (Boorn et al, 2010) and also provides reassurance to the school staff that favourable differences or improvements have been noticed in meeting individual needs.

The findings gathered from the questionnaires were also verified from inferences made during observations I conducted over 5 separate visits to the facility. These observations were used to triangulate findings from the questionnaires by looking at the NG staff practice during adult to child interactions. From these observations I witnessed staff modelling positive social interaction to the children. It was abundantly clear that the children's social and emotional needs were of paramount importance and key principles of the `classic' model were acted out. I observed lots of labelled praise, positive discourse that communicated to the child they were valued individually, proximity praise, rewarding positive choices, empathy, and an emphasis on improving and enhancing speaking and listening skills. From my observations, I got the impression that meeting the social and emotional needs of the children were seen and treated as priority by the NG staff; in preference for meeting behavioural and learning needs. For example, I observed instances where anti-social behaviour between children was tolerated. In a discussion with the NG teacher, they informed me that the NG do follow the school rules but may allow the ignoring of certain behaviours that would not be tolerated in the mainstream school.

Furthermore, in all of my 5 visits to the NG I did not witness any curriculum-based learning. There was a great deal of singing, cooking, playing games and opportunities for reciprocal interaction. The omission of this formal learning may be reflected in the findings of this evaluation from children and school staff perspectives, which suggested

that learning was the least improved domain. Notwithstanding most children attending this NG were not developmentally ready to access formal education; as indicated by their Boxall Profile scores.

Parents reported the least improvements were in their child's behaviour. Furthermore, it was reported by the NG teacher that parents do not receive regular feedback on their children's progress. Evidence suggests (Binnie and Allen, 2008); a useful method of liaising with parents is through the introduction of a `drop in' forum, to enable staff to share progress and strategies that work with parents/carers to help them improve both parenting skills and their child's behaviour at home.

Children attending the NG reported the most differences in making friends and coming to school. Furthermore, the NG teacher confirmed that she had witnessed improvements in most NG children's school attendance since their inclusion to the group. The NG appeared to provide a secure attachment and in doing so has enabled the children to form an attachment to their education (Gilligan, 1998). This attachment was reinforced through making friendships with other children in the NG and in the mainstream classroom.

Furthermore, it can be said that the NG in this study provides a facilitative role in helping the children to become emotionally contained (Bion, 1967, in Geddes, 2007). Through empathetic and affectionate NG practice the staff recognised and understood the child's emotional difficulties and returned them in a way the child found manageable; freeing up energy to help NG children build social relationships. The term `containment` originates from Bion (1967) and refers to the process of helping an individual control their feelings of

anxiety, so that they do not feel overwhelmed and therefore have the capacity for emotional growth and genuine learning, McLoughlin (2010). School staff reported least improvements in behaviour and learning. Therefore clearer and more consistent liaison between mainstream and NG staff is needed. This could include regular open days in the NG to share good theory and practice of NGs in dealing with SEBD and tackling behaviour difficulties to improve behaviour in the classrooms. The development of a collaborative and supportive approach could be strengthened by the mainstream staff sharing information on curriculum planning with NG staff.

A major need for development highlighted by this study was for more consistent and accurate monitoring and evaluation of meeting the needs of children placed in the NG. For instance, the NGs only current method of monitoring and evaluating NG children's progress is through the Boxall Profile. If these were taken as the `gold standard' of monitoring progress, as they are in most NGs; then the data from this study would suggest that the NG was not meeting the children's SEB needs. Therefore, further improvements in monitoring could include the regular collection of quotes from staff, children and parents on what is going well and what needs improving, and the completion of evaluation questionnaires from children, their parents and mainstream staff to feed into the planning cycle.

Furthermore, from this study the following changes to the current NG practice would be recommended to the school:

- To ensure there is consistent staff working in the NG provision.

- A greater emphasis on developing curriculum based learning in the NG, so children attending the NG and being removed from their classes are not falling further behind academically
- To develop monitoring systems for the other NG's in the school that were not included in this evaluation
- Develop an in-house NG steering group and ensure there is both parental and pupil involvement
- Ensure there are specific targets to focus on improving NG practice, data from the Boxall Profile indicates a need to focus on developing listening skills, so children follow adult instructions, and social skills, so children can develop their skills in cooperative and reciprocal play.

Limitations of this study

There are various limitations to the current study implying that any interpretation of the findings should be viewed with caution. Firstly, the internal validity of this study is questionable due to the wording of some of the questions in the questionnaires. For example, in the children's questionnaire, they were asked how they `felt different about` one of the domains (see appendix 3). These statements are ambiguous as feeling different about something alone does not tell us whether the feeling is a positive (happiness) or a negative feeling (sadness). Furthermore, asking the children these questions I was unsure whether I was accurately accessing their perceptions. On reflection, due to their age (5 and 6), it is difficult to know whether they understood the questions or the purpose of the questions.

The staff questionnaire was the most ambiguously worded questionnaire from the 3 used in this study. For instance, question 1 (see appendix 5) contained the term “confident.” However, the word was not defined and therefore, open to interpretation. Confidence may have referred to any one of the domains under investigation. Because the questionnaires were self-report, there was no way of clarifying responses unless participants elaborated on their responses and included additional comments. On reflection, an alternative and more suited methodology to gather data would have been through observation and interviewing key staff in relation to the Nurture Group Network (2010) key principles.

There is also controversy in isolating the difference or improvements reported to the children’s attendance in the NG, as members of the school staff reported that there were other therapeutic interventions that promoted nurturing practice in the school, such as Theraplay (Booth and Jernberg, 2010).

Further limitations of the study are related to its design. To measure difference or improvements in learning, National Curriculum levels could have been used as a comparison and monitored and evaluated on similar timescales as the Boxall Profiles. Using a comparison or control group would have provided a greater indication of the beneficial qualities of NGs in helping to ameliorate the barriers to learning.

A further limitation of this study is the lack of external validity and generalisability of the findings, as they are only representative of the sample from which there were gathered.

The obvious lack of controls, generalisability and causation were implicit in the design of the study, and as such reflects my own epistemological worldview. My epistemological worldview is rooted in interpretivism, where I consider no research can be truly objective as the researcher has an active role in subjectively shaping and contributing to the research from design to conclusion; in short, research is constructed by those involved in it (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, for this study I chose a model that supported my beliefs, biases and assumptions of how knowledge is generated and on reflection used an inappropriate tool in which to gather the findings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, NGs are designed to provide an emotionally, socially and psychologically safe environment in which a child has opportunities to experience second chance learning, Winnicott (1965) and become developmentally "unstuck" (Bomber, 2007). They have their roots within the profession of Educational Psychology and are underpinned by an amalgam of psychological theory; the most pertinent of which is attachment theory (Bowlby, 1958, 1969, 1973 and 1980). If the philosophy of NGs is to be fully adopted it is imperative to understand the psychological theory that underpins them. Through praxis, Educational Psychologists have a valuable role in helping schools, and other professionals to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding about nurturing practice and in turn play a role in evaluating and monitoring the impact of the NGs by applying psychology to better meet the needs of children described as having SEBDs.

On reflection, my role in conducting this small-scale evaluation has given school staff a greater understanding and appreciation of how to evaluate the NG facility. Early

indications through anecdotal feedback from staff, suggests that my involvement was beneficial in helping both NG staff and staff within the mainstream school to reflect, review and develop their own practice in evaluation; and also give them valuable ideas on how to approach the recommendations of improving their evaluation skills as detailed in their most recent OfSTED inspection.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements, thanks and appreciation are expressed to the staff at Rollright Primary School for spending the time to reflect on and share the nurturing practice that occurs in their school. Further thanks are expressed to all parents/carers for their valuable input and to the children attending the key stage 1 NG for sharing their fantastic stories and company with me. Special thanks and appreciation goes to the Head Teacher of Rollright Primary School for accommodating and making me feel welcome in their school. Finally I would like to acknowledge and give special thanks and appreciation to Debbie Jackson, NG Teacher, for allowing me to become part of the NG and for sharing some truly excellent nurturing practice.

All names used in this study are pseudonyms to ensure the identity and anonymity of those who participated are protected.

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Appendix 1

My name is Will Cross,

I am a Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist currently employed by Wherever Educational Psychology Service and based at the office in Small-town.

As a Trainee Educational Psychologist my role involves working within schools with teaching staff and other professionals to help promote the learning and development of children.

I am currently involved in a study to explore opinions of NG practice in your child's school. The purpose of the study is to see what difference the NG makes for children attending the NG. In helping me to gather this information I will be asking school staff and children attending the NG for their views of the NG. To gather the child's views I will be using a brief questionnaire that contains five questions. I would also like you, the experts on your child, to complete a brief questionnaire in relation to how the NG has helped your child. Copies of both these questions are enclosed.

The information gathered from this study will not lead to the identification of a child or adult, as no names will be collected for the study. All information will be kept strictly confidential. Anyone involved in the study have the right to withdraw at any point, even after the questions have been answered. If you do not wish your child to answer the questionnaire, please inform the NG staff.

If you have any questions or would like further information about this study, I am happy to be contacted on xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx or by email on

Many thanks

Will Cross
Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist
Children & Young People's Service - Inclusion

Appendix 2
Parent/carer questionnaire

1) Your child's behaviour has improved since their inclusion to the NG?
(Please tick a box to express your opinion)

Strongly Disagree 1 ☐ **2** ☐ **3** ☐ **4** ☐ **5** ☐ Strongly Agree

Additional Comments:

_____

_____

_____

2) Your child's learning has improved since their inclusion to the NG?
(Please tick a box to express your opinion)

Strongly Disagree 1 ☐ **2** ☐ **3** ☐ **4** ☐ **5** ☐ Strongly Agree

Additional Comments:

_____

_____

_____

3) Your child's social skills (speaking and listening, turn-taking and sharing) have improved since their inclusion to the NG?
(Please tick a box to express your opinion)

Strongly Disagree 1 ☐ **2** ☐ **3** ☐ **4** ☐ **5** ☐ Strongly Agree

Additional Comments:

_____

_____

_____

4) Overall, your child has benefited emotionally from their inclusion in the NG?
(Please tick a box to express your opinion)

Strongly Disagree 1 ☐ **2** ☐ **3** ☐ **4** ☐ **5** ☐ Strongly Agree

Additional Comments:

_____

_____

_____

5) How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the NG in meeting your child's needs? Where 1 means not effective and 10 means extremely effective. (Please circle a number to express your opinion)

Not effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 extremely effective

Additional Comments:

_____

_____

_____

Please return this questionnaire to Debbie Jackson in the NG by Friday the 26th of November

Appendix 3
My feelings about the NG

1) The NG has helped me to feel different about coming to school

☹1□ **2** □ 😐**3** □ **4** □ **5** □☺

2) The NG has helped me to feel different about my behaviour

☹1□ **2** □ 😐**3** □ **4** □ **5** □☺

3) The NG has helped me to feel different about my learning

☹1□ **2** □ 😐**3** □ **4** □ **5** □☺

4) The NG has helped me to feel different about my feelings

☹1□ **2** □ 😐**3** □ **4** □ **5** □☺

5) The NG has helped me to feel different about making friends

☹1□ **2** □ 😐**3** □ **4** □ **5** □☺

Appendix 4

My name is Will Cross,

I am a Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist currently employed by Wherever Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and based at the office in Smalltown.

I am presently involved in a study at your school, to explore perceptions of NG practice, with a specific focus on how NG s contribute to whole-school practice and also how they impact on pupils' social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs.
As staff of the school, your views are important and to explore them I would be grateful if you could complete two short questionnaires; these should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

Copies of both the questionnaires are enclosed for your perusal. One questionnaire aims to explore school staff perceptions of NG practice and its impact on whole-school practice. Whereas, a further questionnaire elicits responses in relation to the impact on the children attending the NG in the domains of social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs.

All responses within the questionnaires will remain strictly confidential and all information that you give will remain anonymous. You will not be required to include your name anywhere on the questionnaire; therefore, no one will be able to trace the information you provide back to you.
Please note that you have the right to withdraw from the study whenever you wish even after the data collection has taken place. All questionnaires will be stored securely and destroyed once the information has been collated. I will also provide a feedback session to share the findings of this study.

If you would like further information, I am happy to be contacted on xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx or w

Thank you, your time and participation in this study is greatly valued and appreciated.

Will Cross
Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist
Children & Young People's Service - Inclusion

Appendix 5
Rollright Staff questionnaire

1) The Pupils' confidence has improved since being involved in the NG

Strongly Disagree 1 ☐ **2** ☐ **3** ☐ **4** ☐ **5** ☐ Strongly Agree

Additional Comments:

_____
_____
_____

2) Pupils attending the NG benefit academically and make progress with their learning

Strongly Disagree 1 ☐ **2** ☐ **3** ☐ **4** ☐ **5** ☐ Strongly Agree

Additional Comments:

_____
_____
_____

3) Pupils attending the NG feel safe and secure

Strongly Disagree 1 ☐ **2** ☐ **3** ☐ **4** ☐ **5** ☐ Strongly Agree

Additional Comments:

_____
_____
_____

4) The pupil's behaviour has improved since their inclusion to the NG

Strongly Disagree 1 ☐ **2** ☐ **3** ☐ **4** ☐ **5** ☐ Strongly Agree

Additional Comments:

_____
_____
_____

5) Pupils that attend the NG have made improvements in group-based activities that require them to use social skills, such as active listening, turn taking and sharing?

Strongly Disagree 1 ☐ **2** ☐ **3** ☐ **4** ☐ **5** ☐ Strongly Agree

Additional Comments:

_____
_____
_____

Please return this questionnaire to Debbie Jackson in the NG by Friday the 26th of November

Appendix 6: Boxall profile sub-strands

	Section 1: developmental strand
Organisation of experience	*a) Gives purposeful attention*
	b) Participates constructively
	c) Connects up experiences
	d) Shows insightful involvement
	e) Engages cognitively with peers
Internalisation of controls	*F) Is emotionally secure*
	g) Is biddable and accepts constraints
	h) Accommodates to others
	i) Responds constructively to others
	j) Maintains internalised standards
	Section 2: Diagnostic Profile
Self limiting features	*q) Disengaged*
	r) Self-negating
Undeveloped behaviour	*s) Makes undifferentiated attachments*
	t) Shows inconsequential behaviour
	u) Craves attachment, reassurance
Unsupported development	*v) Avoids/rejects attachment*
	w) Has undeveloped/insecure sense of self
	x) Shows negativism toward self
	y) Shows negativism towards others
	z) Wants, grads, disregarding others

Doctorate In Applied Educational and Child Psychology (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D.

Postgraduate Training in Educational Psychology

PPR 2: Using dynamic assessment with traveller children, implications for educational psychology practice.

Will Cross 1060365

30.3.12

Chapter 3: Using dynamic assessment with traveller children, implications for educational psychology practice.

Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine whether the use of Dynamic Assessment (DA) was an accessible and suitable assessment approach to be used with a child from a Gypsy/Roma Traveller (GRT) background. The information used for the foci of the study involved an analysis of my account of using DA with a Traveller child as part of the information gathering process for a statutory assessment; the findings of which are presented as an exploratory case study. The main findings of this case study indicate DA, through the use of mediation, had a positive effect on making resources accessible and maximising pupil learning potential. Findings also suggest consideration needs to be given to the quality and level of mediation used during the assessment process. The paper also discusses the use of DA with ethnically diverse populations as part of EP practice, with a particular focus on the need for authentic learning experiences. Further discussion includes proposals that DA is a credible assessment method that provides mechanisms for reducing barriers to learning.

Introduction

This assignment reports the findings from a Trainee Educational Psychologist's use of Dynamic Assessment (DA) with a GRT child for the purposes of a Statutory Assessment. The aims of the study were to ascertain whether DA was a suitable and accessible approach to assess a GRT child's educational needs. From using DA I wanted to discover the GRT child's

learning needs and strengths by looking at how they learnt with support, how responsive they were towards the tasks and set this against how they learnt without assistance.

There is a growing literature base relevant to the use of DA in EP practice (Elliot, 2003, Yeomans, 2008 and Poehner, 2011), and proponents of the DA approach such as Tzuriel (2011) and Feuerstein and Feuerstein (1991) have advocated its use as an alternative, complementary and viable approach to assess the needs of children from ethnic minorities, due to its interactive and supportive nature. However, to date there is no published literature regarding EPs use of DA with the GRT populations.

The rationale for using DA with this ethnically diverse population was two-fold. Firstly, to gain a greater understanding, whether using DA with pupils from GRT populations would be 'fit for purpose' and secondly, other forms of assessment, such as psychometric tests that are ordinarily used as part of EP assessments have received fierce criticism with regard to their relevance and applicability in assessing ethnic minority needs, primarily because they are perceived to overlook the socio-cultural experiences of this cohort (Tzuriel, 2011) and the mismatch between their cultural heritage and the expectations of a school curriculum (Cudworth, 2008). Furthermore, the content of psychometric tests are considered culturally and linguistically biased against ethnic minority populations (Laing and Kamhi, 2003).

The order of this account will begin with a review of professional literature in the areas of EP assessment, DA and its underpinning psychological theory and its applicability to assessing ethnic minorities, furthermore, the education of GRT children will also be reviewed. The present case study will then be introduced and its aims and purposes made explicit. Key findings from the use of DA in this case study will be shared. Following this, the findings will be interpreted and critically analysed highlighting the suitability of using DA with GRT children.

Literature review

Assessment in the EP role

Psychological assessment is considered to be one of the core professional functions of an Educational Psychologist (EP), (The British Psychological Society (BPS) 2002 and Farrell et al, 2006). Assessment is something that is seen as valuable and unique about an EP's role (Ashton and Roberts, 2006), and is also acknowledged as being part of the distinctive contribution in EPs' evidence-based and psychologically applied practice (Cameron, 2006). This core function has been strengthened further with the EPs responsibility for conducting individual assessments as part of the statutory assessment work for Local Authorities.

According to the BPS (2007) assessment includes the use of Psychometric tests, systematic observation and a range of interview/consultation processes with clients, carers and other professionals. Furthermore Freeman and Miller, (2001) have also documented that criterion, curriculum-based and dynamic

forms of assessment are used by EPs. Each of these assessments are selected for different purposes and there is an expectation that the choice of any assessment will need to be 'fit for purpose.'

For any assessment to be considered 'fit for purpose' it needs to be of some practical relevance to the educational needs of the young person being assessed, be appropriate for its intended use and inform future intervention/s. According to the BPS (2002, p.24) assessment materials are selected on the basis of:

- Relevance to the presenting problem and the purpose of the assessment being used
- Sensitivity to ethnic, linguistic and cultural background as well as the emotional and developmental levels of the young person
- Ensuring positive steps are taken to avoid bias in the process of assessment

Overall, choosing what particular assessment tool to use brings with it serious ethical considerations for EPs, as EPs need to be aware of ensuring their selection of assessment methods do not place the young person at a disadvantage. Therefore, equal opportunities and fairness needs to be considered when selecting and using assessment materials, in particular being sensitive to a young person's ethnic, linguistic and cultural background.

Promoting equal opportunities itself is fundamental to the practice of an EP. EPs are advocates for children and young people and through their work they promote equal opportunities practice by promoting inclusion and reducing and challenging social exclusion and inequality of vulnerable and minority groups. In essence, selecting an appropriate assessment that is 'fit for purpose' is another way of EPs demonstrating their own anti-oppressive practice.

The use of Psychometric tests in EP practice

Traditionally EPs administer psychometric tests to assess the needs of young people, who, for whatever reason experience difficulties in their education. These standardised tests are often used to fulfil funding criteria for additional provision in Statutory Assessments (Frederickson and Cline, 2009).

Psychometric tests are used to quantify psychological skills and abilities by comparing individual scores achieved on a test to a wider population. This comparable population is perceived to be representative of the community they are intended to be used with. A distinct criticism of psychometric and standardised tests is that they tend to have a disproportionate underrepresentation of diverse ethnic minorities in their normative samples, or do not include certain populations, for instance, children from Traveller backgrounds (Sternberg and Grigorenko, 2002). This is particularly problematic; if a standardised test is not representative of a certain population then they are not a valid measure for this population (Boyle and Fisher, 2007, p.17).

Furthermore, psychometric tests are not always accessible to the test taker. Generally, the tests are explained in a standardised way by the administrator and if there is deviation from this standardisation there is an assumption that the reliability of the test is compromised.

Using psychometric tests help answer the question, What can a child do now, compared with that of a similar group? There are, in short, a measure of performance. As a consequence they assume a young person's past is the best predictor of their future. Unlike curriculum-based, and dynamic assessment they tell the assessor nothing about how the child's performance can be enhanced (Haywood and Lidz, 2007).

Psychometrics have been fiercely criticised due to their out-dated standardisation, (Sternberg and Grigorenko, 2002, Gould, 1996 and Naglieri, 2000) implying that psychometric tests would not be representative of the current socio-cultural wider population. Additionally, further criticisms have been made regarding the content and language used in psychometric tests: that they are culturally and linguistically biased against diverse populations, Laing and Kamhi, (2003) and therefore overlook differences in life experience, socialisation and early literacy experiences (Stockman, 2000). Furthermore, there is an assumption of universality, implying that the tests have the same meaning for all individuals, thus overlooking key individual social and cultural factors.

These criticisms pose ethical implications for the way in which EPs select and administer assessment materials when working with ethnically diverse groups. In 2006 the DCFS publication, Special Educational Needs and Ethnicity, reported that one pupil in five in England was from an ethnic minority background. With this ratio in mind, EPs are likely to be working with ethnically diverse populations on a regular basis. Furthermore, it has been documented that there are proportionally higher than expected numbers of ethnic minority groups described as having special educational needs (SEN) (DCFS, 2006).

One such minority group that is overrepresented among pupils who have Statements of SEN are Gypsy/Roma and Traveller (GRT) children. A possible reason for this overrepresentation may have arisen as a result of using inappropriate normative assessments that do not reflect the GRT socio-cultural background or may have a specific linguistic bias that could be a disadvantage to this demographic group. It is therefore proposed in this study that an alternative assessment approach that could be appropriate in assessing GRT pupil's educational needs is Dynamic Assessment (DA), due to its interactive and explanative nature, where there is less emphasis on standardised instructions and more focus on individualised teaching and scaffolding the learner's responses. This is where the discussion now turns.

What is Dynamic Assessment?

Dynamic Assessment (DA) is an umbrella term used to define various approaches rather than a specific procedure. The versions referred to in this

study centre on the ideas of Feuerstein (1979) and Tzuriel (2001). DA is an assessment and intervention in one, (Haywood and Lidz, 2007). First it follows a process of testing, to see what the learner can do independently or unaided, then there is a teaching element to see what the learner can do with support; this is referred to as mediation. Finally, DA involves retesting the learner to assess what support was beneficial to them and identify strengths and deficits in the learner's cognitive processing. By focusing on the learner's processing skills, DA helps the assessor to investigate and understand how a learner learns, how much learning can be improved with support, what the primary obstacles to learning are, and what the learning potential is once these obstacles to learning are reduced. This test-teach-retest process therefore allows the assessment procedure to be tailored to the learner's needs, unlike normative and standardised tests that assume one size fits all.

Overall, DA has been recognised as a useful assessment methodology when there are discrepancies in language, language delays and difference between the maternal language and the language of the school (Haywood and Lidz, 2007) and there is a growing literature base for DA that has been applied to children with speech and language difficulties, for example (Law and Camilleri, 2007). Moreover, DA has been advocated as a preferred model to static tests when there are marked cultural differences between those being examined and the majority culture (Haywood and Lidz 2007 and Lidz, 1995). DA has also received support (Elliott, 2003) because unlike psychometric tests where extraneous variables are controlled, DA does not overlook the non-

intellectual factors, such as unfamiliarity with the test materials and motivation of the test taker.

The use of Dynamic Assessment in EP work

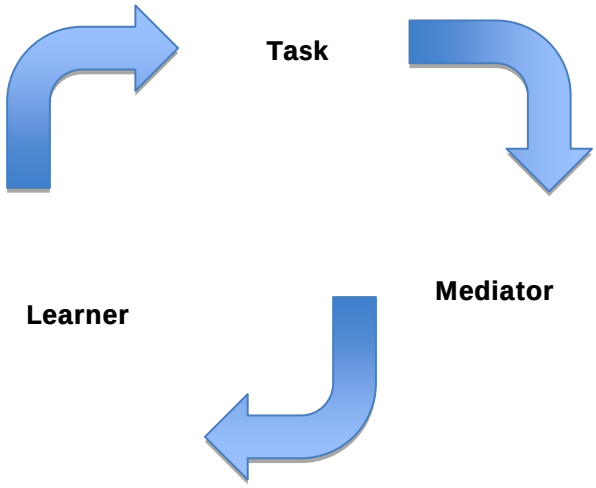
In 1996 Elliott et al, and in 1997 Stringer et al, defined DA as a significant psychological assessment approach that was capable of empowering EPs to answer the question why a child is having a difficulty in their learning. In 2000, Deutsch and Reynolds surveyed UK EP Services and their use of DA and their results indicated widespread awareness of DA but low levels of implementation in practice. In 2009 Stringer, (in Hick et al., 2009) continued his advocacy for DA by declaring that EPs could make a significant contribution to understanding and promoting inclusive learning at an individual level. However, to date, DA still remains on the periphery of psychoeducational assessment practice (Poehner, 2011).

Mediation: supporting learning through interaction

A significant feature of DA is the instructional interaction between the assessor and learner during a task. This interaction has been defined as mediation (Feuerstein et al, 1979) and its purpose is to reveal learning potential rather than measure performance (Yeomans, 2008). This interaction is depicted in figure 1 below. However, this perspective is not without its critics. Snow (1990) argues that DA cannot be classified as an assessment as it does not include a form of measurement, which is 'fundamental in all science.' Furthermore, Glutting and McDermott (1990) have also criticised

the concept of mediation because of the latitude in the administration of mediation given, which differs from child to child.

Figure 1: The Tripartite learning Model – after Feuerstein et al (1979)



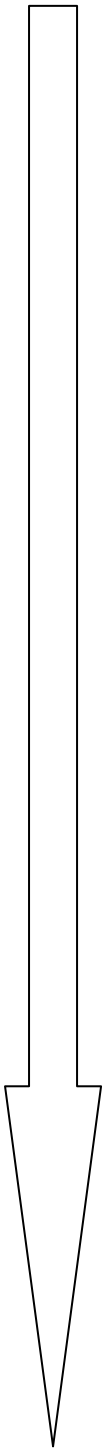
The tripartite learning model emphasises the key role that mediation has in helping to support the learner during a task. There is an assumption that a greater insight into learning is achieved through this interaction, (Vygotsky, 1978) where the assessor and pupil collaborate to produce the best performance the pupil is capable of, at that time, with the help of an adult, as opposed to withholding help to produce typical performance as seen in a psychometric test (Gipps, 1994, p.9).

Typically in DA, during the mediation phase, the initial support is given by the assessor through modelling or demonstrating to enable the learner to construct an understanding of the task. Once this is achieved, support is withdrawn when the learner appears to be coping with the task or enhanced incrementally if the learner is having difficulty with the task. Mediation is

therefore used as a means of improving and correcting deficient cognitive functions (Yeomans, 2008, p.106) and it is this support that sets DA in contrast to static, normative psychometric tests. According to Lidz (1995) mediation is about trying to understand the learner.

Support through mediation is given in different levels, see figure 2. The level at which support is needed is determined by the assessor through observing the learner's interaction with the task and evaluating what the learner can do successfully on their own; this is an indication of their current level of cognitive functioning or ZAD (Zone of Actual Development) (Vygotsky, 1978). Once the ZAD has been established the tasks are presented just beyond the learner's current level of functioning to see what level of support is required to help them progress. Mediation is generally given when a learner experiences difficulty in the task. It is the interaction between the learner and the assessor that creates the ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) (Vygotsky, 1978, in Haywood and Lidz, 2007, p.43) and gives an indication of what the learner can do with support; their potential to learn.

Figure 2: Levels of Mediation



0: Hand over hand guidance

Modelling with initial guidance which is then withdrawn

Modelling the task using specific examples of rules, concepts and strategies

Pointing out general characteristics (but not specifically related to the task)

Asking for further applications of strategies used previously; using previously produced change

Teaching how to choose appropriate strategies, using previous input from mediation

Student applies previous strategies and rules with increasing flexibility

10: Previous mediation internalised and is fully self regulating

Adapted From Deutsch (2003)

Through the use of DA there is an assumption that cognitive ability can be changed through mediation (Feuerstein et al, 1979). However, as Yeomans (2008) has stipulated, this change is unlikely to lead to any permanency (p.6). The purpose of mediation according to Poehner (2011) is to *offer support that is sufficiently explicit enough to be helpful to the learner but not so explicit that the assessor takes over more of the activity than is necessary* (Poehner, 2011, p.102). However, there lies a difficulty with this explanation, as it is problematic to know when precisely the assessor is providing the appropriate level of mediation to the child to meet their current needs. Therefore, using mediation as a means of support appears a 'guessing game' for the assessor.

Further limitations have been proposed by Haywood and Lidz (2007), in that much of the interpretation of DA data depends on the skill and experience of the assessor and different assessors may reach different conclusions that reflect their own training and experience (p.3/4). Moreover, mediation relies heavily on verbal explanations, an aspect that has been criticised by Jeltova, et al (2007) as a potential barrier to those who have receptive or expressive language difficulties or those of bilingual speaking backgrounds. Finally, DA has also received criticism over the apparent lack of published data to support its validity as an assessment method (Law and Camilleri, 2007).

<u>The psychological theory underpinning DA</u>

Feuerstein's view of assessment is heavily influenced by the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky, most notably Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is defined by Vygotsky (1978) as the distance

between the actual development of a child as determined by independent problem solving and the potential development as determined through assisted problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more able peers, and it is through mediation that DA is assumed to work within the ZPD (Lidz, 1995).

Vygotsky's ZPD has its origins in social interaction, where language is conceived as the vehicle for developing knowledge; learning therefore, from a Vygotskyian perspective, is a social process. In DA it is the social interchange that occurs during the instruction of the mediation process that creates the possibility for further understanding and development to occur (Daniels in Hick et al, 2009).

However, the ZPD does little to explain what the outcomes for children are when there is variance in the quality of support or relevance of mediation given. For example, Valsiner and Van der Veer (1993) have questioned what happens when a child's developmental potential is under or overestimated by an incompetent assessor. In DA research, there appears to be an assumption about the role of the assessor as a competent other, which overlooks the subjective and individualistic nature of support that could be given, which is dependent upon their previous experience, skills and understanding of mediation strategies.

DA and its potential with ethnic minority children and young people

Budoff (1987) proposed that DA removes the bias found in standardised assessment methods towards children from socio-culturally diverse and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, by offering them opportunities for clarification through mediation of concepts not found in their cultural experiences.

There is further evidence that DA is a suitable assessment method to use with minority populations, as evidenced by Robinson-Zanartu, and Aganza, (2000) and Anton (2009) where DA has been successfully applied to second language learners. However, as previously stated, DA is principally dependent upon language as a use of intervention, and as such could become a barrier to those individuals who have language difficulties. However, and in contrast, DA has been found to address fairness, through the use of mediation in assessment by offering support that is culturally accessible (Poehner, 2011).

The education of Gypsy/Roma Traveller children (GRT)

The 1967 Plowden Report and the 1985 Swann Report have documented over time that the UK education system does not meet GRT children's educational needs. More recently, OfSTED (2003) reported that GRT pupils achieve the lowest attainment levels of any other minority group and this underachievement is viewed as the GRT child having special educational needs (SEN) when compared to normative values (Dyson and Gallannaugh, 2008). However, this underachievement in mainstream education may be due to cultural differences not accounted for that impact on the GRT's

attainment levels, including: poor school attendance, which is the worst of any minority ethnic group (OfSTED, 2003), issues of racism and social exclusion (Lloyd and Stead, 2001), and lack of recognition regarding their cultural heritage (Lloyd and McCluskey, 2008).

Bhopal (2000) suggests, providing equal educational opportunities presents a challenge for GRT children to ensure that differences in culture and lifestyle are not seen in deficit terms. Furthermore, Jordan (2001) has also documented that underachievement in GRT children is viewed as a pupil-deficit and recommended a need to shift focus from pupils, to changes in the curriculum. However, this change has some way to go as OfSTED reports in 1996 and 1999 have highlighted the inflexibility in the curriculum as one of the major factors contributing to GRT children's underachievement. Furthermore, Jordan (2001) suggests the prescriptive nature of the National Curriculum is a serious barrier to GRT children's learning and contributes to them being labelled as SEN in some cases.

How SEN is conceptualised obviously influences whether GRT underachievement is perceived as SEN and this will depend on whether they are assessed by looking at individual differences between children, or from an interactionist perspective that accounts for the quality of teaching, content of curriculum, and support given to help access the curriculum.

The labelling and conceptualisation of GRT children's differences in cultural experiences as manifesting itself as SEN, may account for the

disproportionality of this cohort being classified as such. Evidence from DCFS (2006) found that GRT pupils are over represented among many categories of SEN both with and without Statements. In fact it was found GRT pupils were 2.7 times more likely than White British pupils to be identified as having SEN. Conclusions drawn from this DCFS publication indicate that this disproportionality is socially constructed, as the GRT pupils' learning and behaviour is interpreted in terms of expected patterns (norms) of behaviour and therefore overlook essential socio-cultural factors pertinent to the GRT heritage.

In support of the DCFS (2006) findings, Dyson and Gallannaugh (2008) proposed that disproportionality reflects broad educational and social inequalities and raises questions regarding the equitability of the SEN system, particularly for ethnic minority pupils. Moreover, disproportionality and over representation of SEN might arise as a result of the assessment tools used with ethnic minority children, which can be addressed by supplementing static measures with dynamic measures (Jeltova, et al, 2007, p.282).

A key argument within this study is that DA is better suited for assessing children and young people from ethnic minorities than static tests, because it does not discriminate against a child for failing to know something that may be culturally determined (Stringer, 2009, p. 132). Instead, through mediation the learner is able to engage with the assessment materials, which would otherwise be culturally or linguistically difficult to access if a static test had

been the preferential choice. This therefore is the rationale for using DA to assess a GRT child's educational needs.

Original empirical work undertaken

The present study details the findings from a case study that focuses on the statutory assessment of a GRT child with the use of Dynamic Assessment (DA). The child, a boy named M for the purpose of anonymity, was 7 years and 11 months, and in year 3 at the time the assessment was conducted.

M lives with his mother and older sister. M's family are GRT who live in a traditional trailer on an official site. His family's preferred language is Romany. M started formal education in year 1, missing any pre-school education. Furthermore, his school attendance like many Traveller children was sporadic and therefore he had missed large proportions of the curriculum and this absence had a negative impact on his familiarity and understanding of formal learning.

M was first brought to the attention of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) at the end of key stage one. The nature of concern described by the school in their referral detailed that M had difficulty with his speech and communication, in addition to his understanding and recognition of reading, writing and numeracy, where he was working at 'P' levels across all areas of the curriculum (P levels are performance descriptors for children with learning difficulties). M also had received intensive support from the Speech and

Language Therapy Service to help him develop his expressive and receptive language skills.

Prior to my involvement with M, I requested further background information on his schooling and home life from the school SENCo and M's mother. From this information I plotted M's difficulties he was experiencing in school on two contrasting Interactive Factors Frameworks (IFF) (Morton and Frith, 1995). These differing IFF's aided me to identify the factors that may be influencing M's difficulties in the learning environment and devise hypotheses, which led to helping me to decide on an appropriate assessment methodology.

The IFFs reflect two contrasting conceptualisations of SEN: a normative view, as detailed in M's summative assessments from school, that compares his attainment levels to other pupils (see appendix 1) and a socio-cultural view, that accounts for cultural discrepancies in the curriculum, and M's interrupted learning experiences (see appendix 2). Plotting M's needs onto these differing conceptualisations of SEN enabled me to reflect on what would be a more suited and appropriate assessment methodology to use for the statutory assessment and advice. I felt that the current discrepancies in his learning were exacerbated by comparing his academic levels to that of his peers, where no consideration had been given to his interrupted learning, late starting point, or cultural and linguistic differences in the curriculum. I therefore felt M required a heavily mediated and accessible assessment,

where he had opportunities to receive support to ensure he was not put at a disadvantage and therefore I chose DA.

My first involvement with M focused on conducting an observation of him during a Literacy lesson. From my observations I noticed that M required ongoing and periodic adult support, through differentiated adult instructions and the use of visual aids to help him access his learning. Following this observation I used two standardised assessments and provided M's school with recommendations to help support his learning (see appendix 3 for School Action Plus report). However, the use of these standardised assessments did not give me an indication of how M learns; instead I found out what M could and could not do (the products of learning). The School Action report was used as part of the evidence by the school to submit a Request for Statutory Assessment. I had the responsibility of assessing M's needs for this assessment and with the information gathered from my previous visits and assessments I decided to use DA as an assessment methodology.

My aims of using DA as an assessment method were to explore:

- How M learns with and without support,
- What difference this support made to facilitate M's learning, and
- Whether the support could provide information regarding his strengths and needs in relation to learning.

An additional reason why I selected to use DA as an assessment methodology is because DA is commensurate with my epistemological views of how learning occurs. I believe that learning occurs through social interaction and dialogue, where ideas are shared and developed further. I therefore favour a constructivist paradigm that acknowledges the researcher's role in constructing reality, rather than being an independent observer who does not influence the production of knowledge, as assumed by advocates of psychometric assessments.

The resulting psychological advice written for the Statutory Assessment using DA is in appendix 4. This psychological advice details the DA tests and procedure used in this study. These included the 16 Word Memory Test (Feuerstein) and the Organisation of Dots (Rey and Feuerstein) (see appendix 5 for both tests). I selected these assessments because they are relatively uncomplicated and would be accessible to M. I also had previous knowledge of using them. Furthermore, the assessments tapped into areas the school described as areas of concern in their Request for Statutory Assessment, namely auditory memory, poor concentration, impulsivity and eye-to-hand coordination.

The 16 Word Memory Test (With Categorisation)

I used this test to assess M's ability to remember verbal stimulus as school staff had informed me that M had difficulty retaining verbal information. The test was also used to assess M's concentration, attention and capacity to learn.

I read a list of 16 words, and after a time delay of 10 seconds I asked M to recall as many words as he could remember, in no particular order. A series of trials were administered, ten in total. Each trial involved the same set of words, which were presented in the same order. The words were divided equally into four categories (clothing, food, animals and stationery) (see appendix 5). M was not informed about the categories. The first four trials were administered without intervention in order to assess spontaneous recall. After trial four I used mediation by asking questions to gauge M's skills, knowledge and ability to learn. The intention of conducting this recursive process of mediation was to determine whether M could develop skills to retain the words, including using categorisation and organisation. This part of the assessment applies the principles of Vygotsky's ZPD. Further mediation was given after the sixth and ninth trials. Examples of questions that were used as mediation in this test are included in appendices 4, 6 and the findings section. Furthermore, mediation was used to indicate M's maximal performance on the tests.

The Organisation of Dots

This test was used to assess M's ability to organise and establish a series of visual relationships and produce simple geometric shapes from dots. Additionally, the test was used to assess M's planning and searching skills, applying rules, conservation and propensity to act impulsively. This test was chosen to assess M, as staff at his school had concerns with his eye-to-hand coordination, fine motor skills and also ability to write symbols.

In this test, M was asked to join a series of dots into two shapes, a square and a triangle (see appendix 5), this organisation is completed by drawing lines to connect the dots to make the required shapes. Each frame in the test contains the exact number of dots required to form the shapes; therefore each dot can only be used once. The test becomes more complex as the pupil works through it, as dots overlap and become rotated, requiring greater concentration, planning and searching skills. This test is explained further in appendix 4.

The language used within the administration and mediation of the tests was simplified to ensure M could access and understand what he was being asked to do. I was mindful of M's cultural heritage and his restricted access to education, and therefore attempted to minimise any ambiguities during his involvement in the tests. Therefore, through mediation, I attempted to adjust my communication style to meet M's level of understanding and developmental level. A selection of the questions I used for mediation are illustrated in appendix 6.

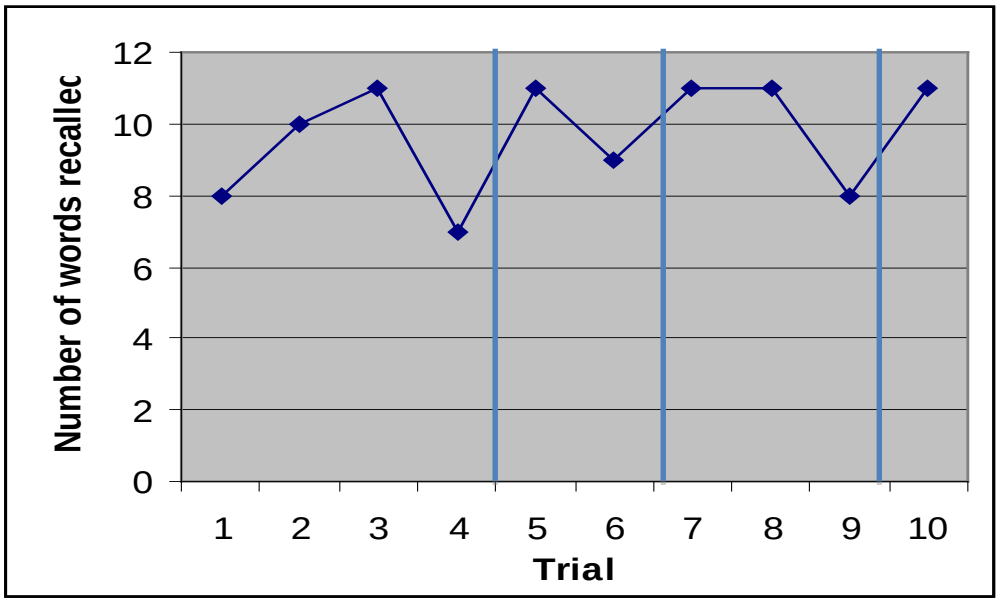
Presentation of Findings

16 Word Memory Test (with categorisation)

Findings from this test indicate that on the first three trials M concentrated and listened well and incrementally recalled more words, however analysis of the order in which he recalled the words suggested that he had not deduced there were words that formed categories. On his third trial, M had managed

to recall 11 out of 16 words (see figure 3), suggesting he had strengths in spontaneous recall. However, he was unable to sustain this level of recall and on the fourth trial only managed to recall 7 out of 16 words, furthermore during this trial M made many repetitions. His attention and concentration at this point had appeared to hinder his recall skills and after this trial M's motivation appeared to decrease.

Figure 3. A line graph representing number of words recalled over 10 trials in the 16 Word Memory Test



As M appeared to find difficulty in concentrating and because his recall included no discernable patterns the first stage of mediation was delivered. (In figure 3, mediation is represented as the vertical intersecting lines). This mediation focused on eliciting M's views to appreciate how he remembered the words (See appendix 4 and 6 for questions asked). During this mediation period M was asked to "put the words together in groups" as he told me he was trying to remember the order I was saying the words, however, I recognised no such pattern. When mediation was used, it was initially given

by enquiring about the approach of M's recall strategies and suggesting an alternative approach. Further mediation was given by asking M "can you find a way to remember the words better?" M's response was to start a dialogue with me about the words in the list; this included telling me that he had clothes ("got clothes") and cared for animals ("got puppies and horses"). At this stage I enquired further about the other categories ("What other groups of words can you remember?") until all four groups had been discussed.

Following mediation M applied the principles of categorising the words and his overall recall improved by four words on the previous trial, his processing speed was also vastly superior in comparison to previous trials; implying verbal mediation had a positive impact in helping M to organise the information he was receiving if he was given an opportunity to immediately recall the same information. However during the sixth trial M's rate of recall decreased and he reverted to recalling strategies he had been using pre-mediation, he also appeared tired and yawned repeatedly, as a consequence his concentration, speed of processing and accuracy of recall was depleted.

After trial six, further mediation was delivered; this included a discussion about the categories, recalling the number and name of the categories. After the verbal recall, mediation was presented in a visual form on an A4 sheet (see appendix 4). This sheet included all four category headings and through discussion M and I plotted the words into their allotted categories once all 16

words had been elicited. Mediation was given for roughly five minutes, with an emphasis on chunking words into categories.

A further three trials were administered, on the seventh M appeared to apply the rules of categorisation more readily, recalling a total of 11 words. In trial eight this plateaued. During these trials I noticed M showed greater attention and concentration, his verbal recall was faster and he used self-talk to help him aid recall. M's approach was also more systematic.

The assessment was separated by a one-hour break and on the ninth trial M appeared to forget the previous strategies we had learnt to aid recall. He made frequent repetitions and there was no indication of applying categorisation. In the final trial the test was simplified and the clothes category was removed, giving M the task of recalling 12 words. M was once again given mediation in the form of both verbal and visual prompting for roughly five minutes. M managed to recall 11 words in total, omitting the word 'tomato'. The role of mediation and verbal and visual repetition had aided M to improve his organisation and develop strategies for recall. However, during the task M did appear to recognise some words more than others, such as 'horse' and 'dog', words that held greater socio-cultural relevance to his life than 'sharpener', which M only recalled once.

Organisation of Dots

In this test, M was able to listen to and follow the introductory instructions (see appendix 4). He could name the shapes, but not tell me the properties

of these shapes. His response was slow but precise as he joined up singular dots to make triangles and squares. I noticed M looked at me for reassurance, which I gladly gave, by responding to saying “yes, well done, keep going”. As the complexity of the task changed and the shapes started to overlap, M had difficulty working out the spatial position of the shapes. I allowed him to keep trying and after four unsuccessful attempts resulting in unfinished and irregular shapes I used mediation to support him.

The mediation I used focused on rule formation, ensuring he used all the dots, and to use only one dot at a time. I felt this level of mediation was an appropriate starting point for M; any more abstract such as “finding the square first,” would not have helped him to move on with the task, as this was precisely the level of difficulty he was experiencing. M continued with the task and continued to have difficulty deciphering which dots formed which shapes, his attempts after this initial mediation were similar to those prior to mediation. I therefore intervened and drew M’s attention to the characteristics of the square and triangle by modelling the completion of the shapes, first by explaining verbally, then with my finger as a guide, and then by joining the dots by drawing lines to form the shapes. I repeated this process twice and ensured M was observing my mediational strategies.

Following the mediation M worked fast through the next four examples and did not apply the rules that were shared, instead his approach was impulsive. I therefore mediated again, drawing attention to the characteristics of the square and triangle and contrasting the attributes to these shapes, pointing

out that the shape stayed the same even though they rotate and overlap ("move round and cross over"). I also discussed the use of dots and that they could only be used once by one shape at a time. M had difficulty following my explanations and I noticed that when he restarted he forgot the associated rules. I repeated the rules again, how many dots make up a square and used correct responses as a model to illustrate my point. M attempted the task again and made similar errors. I therefore altered the mediation and repeated the rules verbally and visually prior to him attempting each frame. M's next two attempts were completed correctly and I used mediation to consolidate this level of processing (see appendix 4 for this dialogue). M could not successfully complete this task and he continued to forget previous instructions. The final mediation involved hand-over-hand mediation with direct physical prompts, only then could M successfully complete this task. When this mediation was removed he quickly reverted to joining up dots to make irregular shapes. It is my opinion there was too much visual information for M to process in this test.

Discussion

The main aims of the current study were to explore whether DA was a suitable and accessible assessment methodology to gather data for a GRT child's (M) educational needs. An additional aim was to discover how M learnt with and without support, what difference the support (mediation) made and whether mediation could provide (useful) information regarding his cognitive strengths and needs.

Findings from the 16 Word Memory Test (Feuerstein) indicate that without support M's attention and concentration to recall verbal stimuli over time appeared to decrease. This was evidenced during his poor recall following a one-hour break in the assessment, providing evidence to support Yeomans' (2008) postulation that mediation is unlikely to lead to any permanent change. However, the use of mediation enabled M to fully access the assessment and the explanations given helped consolidate expectations and also gave him reassurances on what he was required to do. It is my opinion that without the incremental support given on the three occasions of mediation, he would have recalled significantly lower levels of words, as evidenced in the fourth trial.

Furthermore, mediation helped aid M's concentration over longer periods, the rehearsal of how to group the words aided his organisational skills and not only improved the quantity of recall but also the quality, as he applied categorisation and recalled words in a more accurate and fluent way. Without this mediation I do not feel M would have deduced the words formed categories. M also learnt better when he received support from both verbal and visual information simultaneously, which was introduced after trial six. This level of mediation would not have been possible using a standardised test, as the 16 Word Memory Test is specifically verbal in nature to test auditory working memory. However, M required mediation at a more concrete level to aid him to see what the groups looked like.

In my opinion, the language used in the process of mediation was at times, too complex for M to access. This is ironic as the purpose of mediation is to act as a vehicle for developing further knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978), however, at times it became clear M found accessing the assessment problematic, as Jelvota et al (2007) suggest DA is highly verbal in its approach, which can act as a barrier to those with receptive and/or expressive language difficulties. In particular M's home language is Romany and he found certain words in this assessment difficult to relate to, such as 'sharpener' and 'rubber' as they had no cultural significance to his every day life. The way words were presented verbally also did not correspond to his expected dialect, for instance the word 'tomato' is pronounced 'marto' in Romany, so there were some discrepancies in the materials being 'fit for purpose' when applied to a child from a GRT background.

On reflection using DA and the role of mediation led to the immediate improvement in M retrieving information. M needed verbal and visual modelling with initial guidance, implying he needed intensive and periodic adult support to access the test. M learnt to organise and recall more words on each occasion after receiving mediation, therefore using mediation allowed a greater insight into how M learns. During this test his cognitive strengths appeared to be good concentration, attention and listening skills. His cognitive deficits were limited vocabulary, slow processing speed and poor short-term auditory memory. Furthermore, the non-intellectual factors that impacted on his performance in the test would include limited insight and impulsivity, in

addition to perseverance, showing interest and curiosity to engage in the process of mediation.

Findings from the Organisation of Dots (Rey and Feuerstein) are considerably shorter than the 16 Word Memory Test as M found this task particularly difficult to understand. There was no distinctive difference in his learning with or without support, as he responded impulsively despite the level of mediation received. However, conducting the assessment provided vital information about his strengths and needs. I noticed he had poor fine-motor control, which hampered him joining the dots to form shapes; his coordination and spatial skills were also underdeveloped as he had difficulty completing the rotated and overlapping shapes. He also appeared to have difficulty deciphering the visual information on the page and as a compensation strategy I used verbal mediation to help overcome some of the visual discrepancies he was experiencing.

However, despite repeated reframing and simplification of language I felt the mediation I gave was largely inaccessible to M, for example, he had no secure knowledge of shape or space. I noticed M focused more when the task was modelled and a verbal explanation was given simultaneously. M managed to complete two shapes from the support of this mediation, and I mediated again in an attempt to consolidate his learning. On reflection I felt that I over-mediated at this point because M had already shown a degree of success and I then changed to mediate using hand-over-hand, which is the

most intense form of mediation to complete the task. There was, therefore, an element of uncertainty on my part when to mediate and at what level. Poehner (2011) suggested that the level of mediation should be sufficiently explicit to be helpful but not so much that the mediator 'takes over' the activity. However, as previously discussed it is difficult to know what level of mediation is applicable, especially when the practitioner conducting the assessment does not know the child. Haywood and Lidz (2007) proposed that the interpretation of DA depends on the skills and experience of the mediator and I would concur with this assertion. The use of DA for this study was my first, I was not proficient or practised in the art of mediation and I was therefore unsure whether the meditational strategies I used were accessible or suitable enough to meet M's needs and level of understanding. I was also unsure; particularly when administering the Organisation of Dots task of where his ZPD lay, especially as he had difficultly retaining knowledge, he regressed and made mistakes immediately after appearing to understand the task.

Throughout the process of conducting DA I was aware of my own anti-oppressive practice and attempted to ensure the assessment remained accessible to M. However, As Laing and Kamhi (2003) indicate linguistic bias can be associated with assessments where there is a disparity between the dialect used by the examiner, dialect used by the child and the dialect that is expected in the child's response, areas Haywood and Lidz (2007) suggest DA is usefully applied to. Reflecting on my experience of using DA with M, I feel

his lack of comprehension made it difficult for him to access the assessment. There was little in the way of dialectic interaction, as he lacked the necessary expressive language skills and vocabulary to engage in such an exchange, although when he did speak I understood what he was conveying, however, it is inconclusive whether he learned through the interaction that occurred.

According to the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky (1986) a child's development of language and learning is culturally mediated through the interactions with others within a given society, essentially meaning that through speech, adults transmit their knowledge of a culture to the child. This raises interesting questions for the interaction that occurred between M and myself because our languages and cultural understandings are different, so what may be meaningful to M may not be for me and vice versa. Applying this theory to the development of learning in this study suggests that because my communication is not culturally meaningful to M he would not learn and it would be difficult helping him move through his ZPD through mediation. A similar position is advocated by Lave and Wenger (1991), for instance, if learning falls beyond the cultural understanding of the learner it is less likely to be successful. Lave and Wenger (1991) therefore argue for 'authentic learning', learning that involves content a child can relate to using their own cultural experiences. According to Lave and Wenger (1991) through 'authentic learning' there is more probability of engagement and effectiveness of learning and assessment.

This view of authentic learning has relevance to GRT children, including M from this study, as it appears a more plausible way of viewing and meeting GRT educational needs, either through the curriculum or assessment. Currently, within UK mainstream education the way the curriculum is being offered to this cohort tends to overlook their cultural heritage and socio-cultural background, Lloyd and McCluskey, (2008), which is wholly inappropriate in meeting their educational needs (Cudworth, 2008); a concept, Derrington and Kendall (2004) term 'cultural dissonance.' Therefore, following a curriculum that advocates authentic learning is a more helpful and accurate way in conceptualising GRT underachievement as opposed to labelling GRT children's educational needs as SEN, because there is a blatant cultural dissonance in how the curriculum is delivered to this cohort. The school systems may be alien to GRT children, the curriculum is not representative of their needs and this puts them at a distinct disadvantage educationally and culturally.

In this study the socio-cultural learning experiences of M were assessed through the application of DA. Using DA in this study, through mediation, enabled M to access the assessment, that otherwise without support he would have found difficult to do. Overall DA, bar the caveats of linguistic bias, provided useful information regarding how M learnt and illustrated ways mediation could develop his learning. DA also gave useful insights into M's cognitive profile, which if using a psychometric assessment would not have

been possible due to the limited support and guidance typically presented in static, standardised tests.

The present study provides tentative evidence that DA is a viable assessment method to use with the GRT populations, and raises interesting questions about the applicability of socio-cultural theory and how cultural differences can be a barrier to both mediator and child during the transference and exchange of knowledge. A crucial message from this study centres on the need to use DA flexibly and creatively to ensure it reflects the authentic learning needs of the child.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this case study has provided partial evidence that DA is a viable assessment method to use with a child from a GRT background, which through mediation has the potential to limit cultural and linguistic bias in assessment. The interactive process of mediation enabled access and engagement with an assessment that might otherwise have been inaccessible for this child. Findings suggest that through the meditational process it is possible to gather data on how a child learns with and without support, what difference the support makes to facilitate learning and enables the mediator to develop a cognitive profile to inform pedagogic support.

This study has also uncovered caveats that exist in the role of mediation: principally this being the uncertainty of how much or little mediation to give and at what level. Therefore, the knowledge, skill and flexibility of the

mediator are essential to ensure that the experiences a child brings with them to the learning situation are not overlooked but accounted for and developed within the assessment process.

Through mediation, DA makes assessment accessible to more children, regardless of their cultural background. Therefore, using DA is one way EPs can remove some of the barriers to learning and provide services to diverse populations that are 'fit for purpose' and that do not disadvantage a child on the basis of failing to know something that might otherwise be culturally determined. In essence DA allows the promotion of equal opportunity and development of anti-oppressive practice by reconceptualising difficulties in terms of socio-cultural influences rather than normative values.

As Gipps (1994) stipulated, assessment is not an exact science (p.175) and professionals must stop presenting it as such; only then will the position of DA be relocated from the periphery to the centre of psychoeducational assessment practice.

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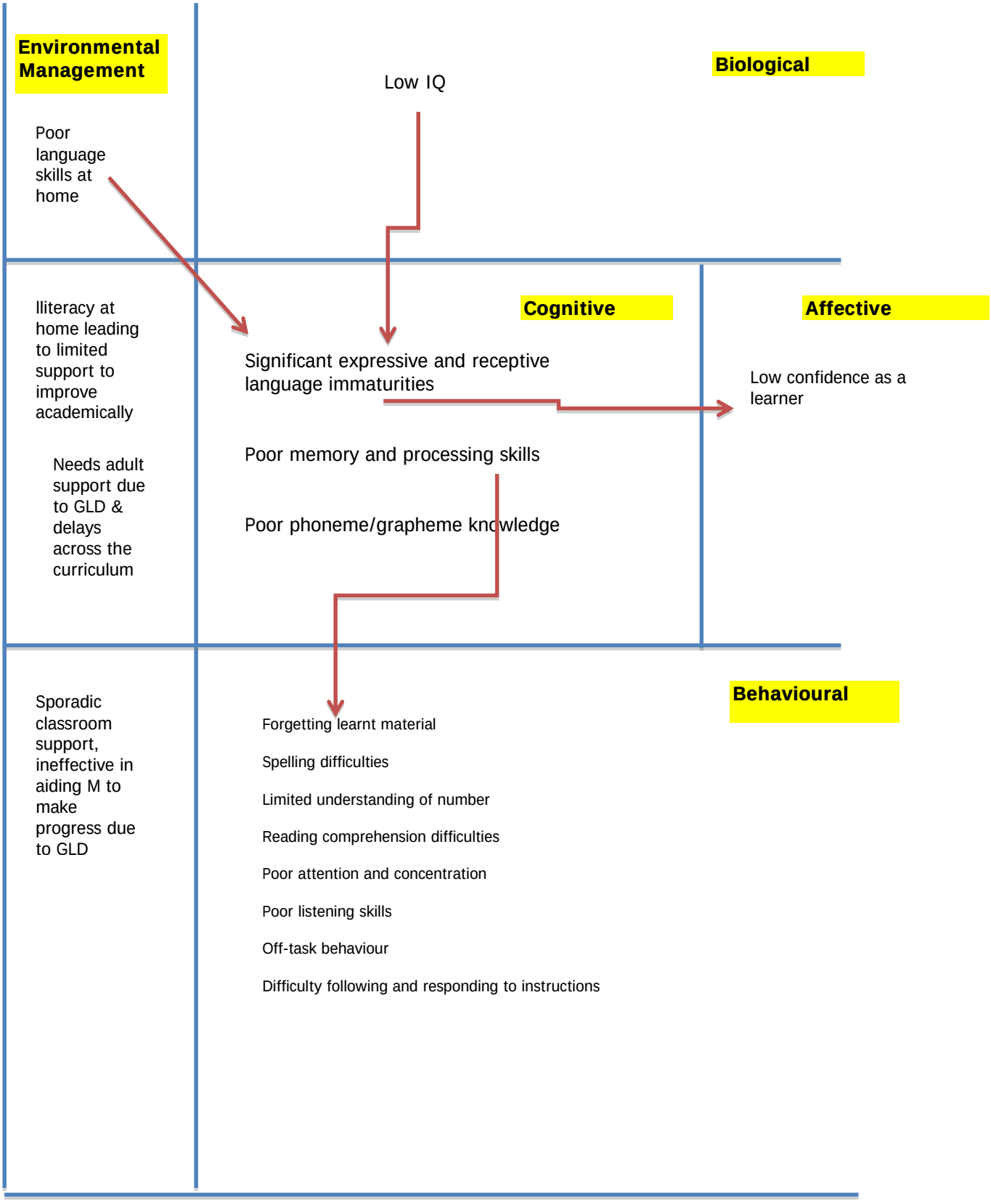
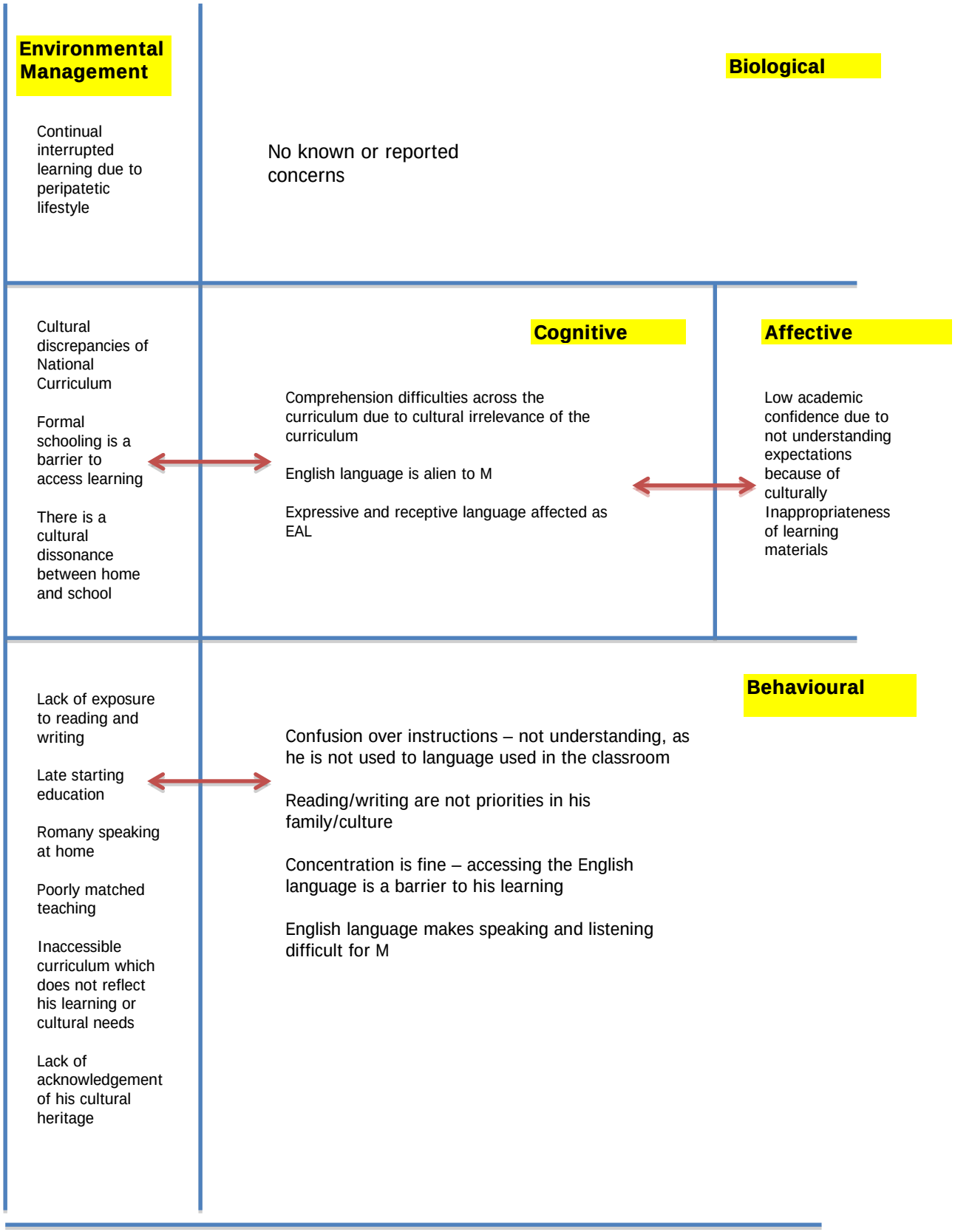
Appendices

Appendix 1: An Interactive factors Framework of this case study: A normative view



Appendix 2: An Interactive factors Framework of this case study: A socio-cultural perspective



Appendix 3: School Action Plus Report

Children and Young People's Service – Inclusion
Educational Psychology Service
Record of Involvement

Will Cross, Trainee Educational Psychologist

Pupil Name: M	**D.O.B** 09.04.2003	**NC Year** Year 3
Date of Visit: 23.11.10		
Purpose of visit: To ascertain M's current strengths and needs **Between:** M (Pupil) and Will Cross (Trainee Educational Psychologist)		
School: G Primary School		

Background

A request for Educational Psychology involvement was made in October 2010 by RC, SENCo of G Primary School, following a planning meeting with Will Cross, Trainee Educational Psychologist in September 2010. During this meeting M was highlighted as a priority case. The nature of concern was related to M's speech and communication skills and lack of academic progress; where he was working below the expected level in all areas across the curriculum.

M started formal education in Reception at G Primary in February 2008; prior to this he had not received any other formal schooling. To date M has received involvement from J V, Speech and Language Therapist and GN, Educational Psychologist. I have also conducted a class observation of M in mid-October during a literacy lesson. M currently receives a high level of additional support in most lessons.

Relevant Home background

M lives with his birth parents, Mr A and Miss P and his older sister, R, who also attends G Primary; R has a history of generalised learning difficulties. The family are Romany travellers, whose first language is Romany.

Nature of Action

I met M during a visit to G Primary School. The purpose of this visit was to work with him one-to-one during various literacy and Numeracy tasks to observe and assess how he approached his learning. During the school visit I conducted a miscue analysis and asked M various questions in relation to his current reading book. I conducted the School Age Achievement Scales of the British Ability Scales (BAS II), sections of the Phonological Assessment Battery (PhAB) and viewed various examples of M's schoolwork. A discussion of my findings from these assessments is included in this report.

M's Interests

Before asking M some questions I introduced myself to him and asked him if he had met me before, he responded "yeah" but could not recall where or when. Following introductions I

asked M some initial questions about what he liked about school and home and what he would like more help with at school and home. M's responses included the following:

What I like to do at school	**What I need more help with at school**
Numbers, spelling tests, playing football	Reading, writing, numbers
What I like to do at home	**What I need more help with at home**
Quads, motorbikes, cars	Reading

During these questions, M appeared a little nervous but was eager to respond to the questions. He seemed to enjoy receiving the one-to-one attention and interest being shown in him. His responses were given in one word answers and he rarely elaborated on his answers when given the opportunity.

Miscue Analysis

Miscue analysis is a technique used to help understand and gain insight into the reading processes that the reader uses. Using this technique allows the analysis of reading proficiency through the use of graphic (visual), syntactic (how words combine to make grammatical sentences), phonic (sounds) and semantic (meaning) cues that the reader may use to make sense of the text.

During this task M was asked to read his current reading book, `A Good Trick`, (Stage one of the Oxford Reading Tree). I had a photocopied version of the same book to mark instances of omissions, self-corrections, phonic attempts, and hesitation. I listened to M read each page and then asked him to retell the story.
In summary I found the following:

- M could not tell me what the title of the book was
- When I asked M what he thought would happen in the story, he replied, "chip" (a character in the story). When I asked whom Chip was, M did not respond.
- M could not accurately count the number of people on the front cover of the book; he answered three when there were five.
- M could identify and name the numbers on the page; however, he could not name a number without seeing number one and counting upwards. For instance, when I asked what the digit 5 was, he did not respond, so I went back to the start of the book and asked M to count on from one.
- M needed prompting to sound out letters, he did not read one word from the book independently, and there were a total of eleven words in the book.
- M had difficulty deciphering the letter "u" in rug, he did not know how to segment or blend to form the word "sheet", he needed visual and auditory prompting to read the word "box", he did not know the "x" letter sound. He did decipher the word "little" from the picture in the book but could not blend the word.
- When I asked M about objects on the page he did not have secure knowledge of rugs, magician, plants (bush), and certain colours, blue or green. M did not understand that the story was based on a magic show. However, due to M's cultural experiences he may not understand the meaning of what a magic show is.
- M did not self-correct unless prompted by me. The majority of the reading exercise was taken up with M's hesitation and time needed to decode the letters on the page.
- M knew what a "sheet" was, why there were different numbers on each page and the numbers got "bigger", he remembered that there was a "rug" in the story and labelled it correctly when I asked him to.
- M could not retell the story when I asked him to. I asked M to retell the story without looking at the book, then looking at the first page and finally retelling it page-by-page.

Achievement Scales of the BAS II

The BAS II includes measures of three areas of educational achievement – Number Skills, Spelling and Word Reading. The Number Skills subtest focuses on the concepts and skills underlying basic competence in arithmetic calculation and also the recognition of printed numbers and knowledge of mathematical operations such as addition and subtraction. During this test M could not accurately read the digits "100, 12, 40 or 31" he did know each single numeral. However, he could not recognise the digits 0 – 10 and does not appear to have an understanding of place value. M was also presented with four vertical sums that either required an addition or subtraction. M copied the numbers in each sum and did not understand 'add' or 'take away.' M did not answer any questions correctly in this subtest.

The Spelling subtest focuses on the child's ability to produce correct spellings of single words. For each item the administrator says the word in isolation then embeds the word in a grammatically correct sentence to provide suitable contextual cues and finally repeats the word in isolation. M was presented with the following words to spell: 'on, and, the, up, go, big, sit, bus, my, box.' M managed to get eight out of ten initial first sounds of the words correct, so his first sounds appear consistent, however, M did not answer any questions correctly in this subtest.

Responses written for the spelling test

Word asked to spell	M's response
on	osw
and	anm
the	Gm2c
up	O△x2 △= triangle
go	Gw2
big	Bm2
sit	2m2c
bus	baiymai
my	M2cw
box	b△sw △= triangle

When writing 2 M may have been trying to write the letter 's.'

The Word Reading subtest is a test of the recognition and oral reading of single words and decoding of words. M did not answer any questions correctly in this subtest. He was asked to read the following words: 'the, up, he, you, box, at, said, out, jump, fish.' M managed to pronounce certain letters correctly, such as 'e' in 'the', but later could not repeat this in the word 'he.' M did not blend any of the letters to form words. He had no understanding of the 'y' letter sound or name, he did on occasion trace over the letter to try to decipher it, I also noticed he needed a long time to think. In addition, I noticed that M became distracted and started to look around the room during this subtest.

Summary of BAS II Achievement Scales

At a chronological age of 7.7 M achieved the following scores:

Subtest	Percentile*	Age equivalent**
Number Skills	0.2	Below 5 years
Spelling	0.1	Below 5 years
Word Reading	0.1	Below 5 years

*Percentile scores indicate the percentage of children of the same age who would be expected to score the same or less on this test, for example a score of 21 would indicate that approximately 20% of pupils would score lower.

Age equivalent scores indicate the age at which a child's ability score is around the average or mid-point on a particular sub-test. For example an age equivalent score of 10 years 9 months, indicates that on that particular test, the child's score was equivalent to that of the average child aged 10 years 9 months. Age equivalent scores provide some indication of the child's ability levels, but should be regarded as approximate and **interpreted with caution.

PhAB

The Phonological Assessment Battery (PhAB) is designed to assess a child's ability to process sounds in spoken language. I tested M using the Naming Speed Test, which is designed to assess the speed of phonological production and coding at whole word level. There are two forms of Naming Speed Tests, both presented visually. The Picture Naming Test, which involves five line drawings of common objects (a hat, a ball, a door, a box and a table) which are repeatedly and randomly presented on an A4 page and there are fifty items in each test, two tests are administered. The Digit Naming Test uses digits 1 to 9. During both tests the child is shown a visual display of the randomly presented items and asked to name them in sequence as quickly as they can.

During the Picture Naming Test, M found it challenging naming the items when being timed, he lost track quickly, forgetting the sequence of the pictures. During the first trial he named the pictures in 70 seconds during the second trial he named them in 80 seconds, making more than three errors. During the Digit Naming test, M was unable to name the digits on the first sequence "23929" he stated, "I can't do it." I praised M for trying and for letting me know that he found it difficult.

No other PhAB subtests were attempted.

Summary of findings

M is a polite and friendly boy who is motivated to learn. He likes quads, motorbikes, and playing football. He reports that he needs help with reading, writing and number skills. The main area of support that M will require is his speech and language and communication skills, in addition to intense support to develop his knowledge of letter names, sounds and symbols, and digit names and symbols. M has a poor understanding of the meaning of operands (+ and -) and therefore has no mastery of basic Mathematical concepts. M displays poor skills in phonological segmentation and blending and has a limited sight word vocabulary. M finds learning in the curriculum difficult and will therefore require a highly differentiated curriculum in comparison to his peers.

Recommendations

- M currently has no secure knowledge of numerals or letter sounds. He will therefore require regular, daily exposure and practise in consolidating the alphabet (naming letters, letter sounds securely) and basic number skills, such as the names of digits 0 – 10. I recommend that M receive support twice a day, once during the morning and once in the afternoon to focus on these key skills. Each session should last between 10 – 15 minutes. A multi-sensory approach will be required to enable M to experience success and to aid the consolidation of new knowledge.
- Plan reading and writing activities in a way, which complements each other.
- M will benefit from an emphasis on the meaning (semantics) of literacy learning. For reading, concentrate on context and comprehension of the text, what does it mean to M? In writing break down text into its constituent parts and explain the ideas and purposes of the text. What is a 't' what does the 't' look like, what does it sound like, what does 't' mean (the first letter of a word, letters make up words). M will need to understand the meaning behind the content before he gains secure knowledge of phonics and early spelling. Speaking and listening activities based around a text will aid M to gain an

understanding and meaning about texts. M will need regular exposure and repetition to texts to become familiar with their content and meaning.

- M will benefit from opportunities to work with adults and other peers to share learning experiences to help him grasp the meaning of text through speaking and listening exercises.
- M will require encouragement to stay motivated and focused during novel learning experiences, ensure he is praised for the slightest steps of improvement. M responds well to stickers.
- Tap into M's interests, base learning on his existing knowledge and the meanings he has about the world, including his cultural heritage. M would benefit from learning in school to take account of his interests and experiences outside school. For instance, to help support M in learning the alphabet and number recognition, photographs of objects that M is familiar with could be used to consolidate new knowledge.
- Ensure that any feedback given to M, whether written or verbal is accessible to him. Explain what the feedback means and use this as an opportunity to move him forward.
- During my work with M, he appeared to prefer information presented in a visual format. Although this may be a preferred way for the discrete tasks he undertook with me, it should not be generalised to all other learning activities. M should still be given opportunity to develop his skills using other forms of learning methods and a multi-sensory approach would be beneficial in supporting M to make progress.
- M would benefit from a learning log, using an A6 size exercise book, which presents one enlarged letter or number on each page. The book can be used to help M practise letters and numbers and would be beneficial if its contents are shared and practised at school each day and at home each evening to help M develop a secure knowledge of number name and letter names and sounds.
- To review M's current IEP targets ensuring the existing targets that have been set are realistic in terms of his current understanding and learning needs.
- M will require intensive one-to-one adult support to access all areas of the primary curriculum.
- For M to have his hearing and sight tested
- For the Speech and Language Therapist to review his progress
- For school to contact the Traveller Education Service (TES) and ensure they have a part to play in supporting M and his family.
- For the school to treat M as an EAL pupil. Any progress will need to be assessed in relation to M's cultural background and the opportunities he has to experience English language. Any planning to support M's needs will need to consider and show awareness to M's previous experience and cultural background. It may be helpful to develop resources and learning materials associated with his cultural heritage to help him attribute some personal relevance, meaning and understanding to his learning. The use of photographs may be a useful starting point in helping M to feel he has some connection to his learning.

I will be happy to discuss any aspect of this report and can be contacted on xxxx xxxxxxx

Will Cross
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 4: Psychological Advice written for M's Statutory Assessment

1996 EDUCATION ACT: PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVICE

Re: M d.o.b. 9/4/2003)
Address:
Attends: G Primary School

Chronological Age at Assessment: 7 years and 11 months

Introduction

This advice is written as part of the statutory assessment of M's Special Educational Needs under the Education Act 1996. The analysis of need and recommendation of provision made here may not remain valid indefinitely as young people's needs can, and do, change. This report is confidential and as such its circulation is restricted to those who have a part to play in M's assessment and subsequently meeting any identified Special Educational Need.

Sources of information

- Consultations with Mrs C Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) at G Primary School on 28/9/2010, 23/11/2011 and 7/4/2011
- Lesson observation of M on 12/10/2010
- Individual assessment with M, at G Primary School 23/11/2010 and 7/4/2011
- Discussion with M's Class Teacher, Mrs L on 7/4/2011
- Discussion with M's mother, Miss P during a school visit on 28/4/2011
- Information from M's Children and Young People Service file.

Background

M currently lives at home with his mother and older sister, R, who also attends G Primary School and has generalised learning difficulties. M's family are Romany travellers who currently live in a trailer on an official site near C. M's mother is committed to ensure that both her children receive a good primary education and are supportive of the process in assessing M's needs.

M started formal education in February 2008 when he attended the Reception Class at G Primary School; prior to this M did not attend Pre- school. On entrance to G Primary School concerns were raised relating to M's understanding and use of spoken language, and knowledge and understanding of written number and letters.

G Primary School requested Children and Young People's Service involvement in 2009 and to date M has received ongoing support from JV, Speech and Language Therapist. In a report dated 12/6/2009 JV concluded that M had delayed comprehension and expression of language; which reflected the cultural differences that exist between home and school. M was described as a boy who communicated in simple and disjointed sentences. A more recent report written by JV in July 2010 indicated that M could follow simple instructions in class when supported by visual cues.

A request for Educational Psychology Service involvement was made in October 2010 by RC, SENCo of G Primary School. The nature of concern was related to M's speech and communication skills and lack of academic progress in all areas across the curriculum; where M was working at P levels for all subjects.

I observed M at G Primary School in October 2010 and conducted an initial assessment of M's needs in November 2010 using a Miscue Analysis, Achievement Scales of the School Age British Ability Scales (BAS II) and subtests of the Phonological Assessment Battery. From this initial assessment I found that M had no secure knowledge of number or letter sounds and had difficulty expressing his views.

In January 2011 M's educational needs were reviewed. Due to the limited progress M had made across the curriculum it was agreed that the next step in supporting M with his learning would be through a Request for Statutory Assessment.

Current situation

Approaches/attitudes to learning

Staff at G Primary School report that M requires a great deal of assistance to help him access and engage with the classroom curriculum. This assistance includes having materials such as a number line to help him identify and record numbers and the alphabet to help him copy and record letters appropriately. Furthermore, M requires support and guidance from an adult during all learning activities, through scaffolding, modelling and explanation. Additional support is also provided through peer support from a more able peer. Staff at G Primary School report that M responds well to the support he receives as he finds it difficult to work successfully independently. M's Class Teacher, Mrs L reports that M does not take pride in his work as he tends to rush any recording but is motivated to try and will persevere in most learning activities. M's approach and attitude towards his learning is affected by poor verbal comprehension skills. M's mother, Miss P informed me that M is keen to learn and enjoys attending school.

From my observations of M during the assessment work I conducted on 23/11/2010 and 7/4/2011, I found that he was happy to persevere with activities but lacked comprehension of instructions and therefore, needed continual support, guidance and mediation to help him formulate and record his responses. During individual work with M I found that he would guess the answer to questions and did not appear to be concerned whether the response was the right one. It is my opinion that M enjoyed the adult attention and support during our work together.

To summarise, M is motivated to learn and will persevere during most learning activities. However, he requires continual adult support to model and describe basic learning activities, and repetition and over learning to aid his comprehension so he can access the highly differentiated curriculum he currently receives.

Cognitive and thinking skills

During my assessment work with M on 23/11/2010 I conducted a series of assessments, including a Miscue Analysis to gain insight into M's reading processes. From this assessment M read twelve pages from a Stage One book of an Oxford Reading Tree scheme book. My findings from this assessment indicated that M did not have secure phonological awareness or decoding, blending and segmenting skills, as he could not read any of the words in the book independently. M relied on the pictures to help him decipher the words, however, a great deal of the words he attempted to read he did so by guessing and consequently did not read a single word correctly. Furthermore, M could not recount the story after I had read it to him.

I also assessed M's cognitive and thinking skills using two different Dynamic Assessment tests on 7/4/2011. Dynamic Assessment is a non-standardised assessment approach that investigates the thinking skills used by the pupil to help problem solve. This assessment method examines the pupil's processing skills, rather than the products or outcomes of learning in order to understand how they learn. In contrast to standardised assessment

methods, the assessor is able to intervene (mediate) and work collaboratively through the problem with the child in order to suggest the next steps in learning and to suggest how the pupil's current thinking skills can be improved. Therefore, intervention is an integral part of the assessment process where a test-teach-retest format is employed.

Dynamic Assessment was used as the assessment methodology for this advice, as M currently accesses the curriculum through the ongoing and periodic adult support, which is typical of that seen in the use of Dynamic Assessment. It was therefore, seen to be a suitable and compatible method to assess M's current needs. Furthermore, due to M's cultural heritage, it was considered that the use of psychometric assessment methodology was not suitable in assessing M's needs, as they are not standardised on the Traveller populations; thus using them may have put M at a disadvantage. Therefore, Dynamic Assessment was also chosen as it does not discriminate against a child on the basis of failing to know something, which might be culturally determined.

The two Dynamic Assessment tools used to assess M's educational needs were The 16 Word Memory Test and The Organisation of Dots Test.

The 16 Word Memory Test assesses the pupil's ability to remember verbal stimulus. The examiner reads a list of sixteen well known words, which are listed in a random order, and the pupil is asked to recall as many of the words as they can remember. A series of trials is administered. The words are equally divided into four categories. These are clothing (trousers, dress, shirt, skirt); vegetables/food (carrot, tomato, cucumber, pepper); animals (dog, cat, horse, mouse) and stationery (sharpener, pen, pencil, rubber). The first four trials are administered without intervention, in order to assess spontaneous recall. After this fourth trial mediation is given, if needed, and six further trials can be conducted if the pupil does not recall all sixteen words. The 16 Word Memory Test also assesses whether the pupil recognises and uses the word categories as a strategy to aid recall.

The 16 Word Memory Test assesses the following cognitive functions: concentration, attention and ability to focus on verbal stimuli; the capacity to memorise verbal stimuli; using categorisation in order to organise information to aid recall and expressing verbal stimuli.

In this test, M initially showed a gradual increase in the number of words he recalled; however, there was no apparent or obvious pattern to his recall. During trials two, three and four, M started to include repetitions in his responses and also include different words that were not presented in the test, such as `fish` and `shoe`. This shows that M had made some associations with the categories that had been previously presented for animals and clothing. During the recall of each trial M needed a great deal of time to process his responses, this time delay may have impacted on his ability to recall the presented words. Mediation was given after the fourth trial, this mediation concentrated on how M managed to remember the words he had recalled. Using phrases such as "Tell me how you remembered the words?" "What do you need to do next to remember more words?" and "Can you find a way to remember the words better?" These questions were asked to elicit whether M was using categorisation as a strategy to aid his recall. M was not aware that the words formed categories, so further mediation was used and I asked him to "Put the words together in groups" during the next trials.

In the following two trials M grouped some words into their categories; however, he also included further words that corresponded to the categories that were not part of the assessment. However, during this fifth trial M recalled more words and did so through the use of categorisation. M's speed of recall was twice as fast as the previous trial. However, during the sixth trial M quickly reverted to using the same strategies pre-mediation and as a consequence his concentration, speed of processing and recall was depleted. Therefore, further mediation was given. This time I discussed the categories with M and shared what categories the words belonged to. M had difficultly recalling all four, although he did recall clothes, food and animals; items that are relevant to his life.

During the following mediation M was presented with an A4 sheet divided into quarters, each quarter contained the word categories. Table 1 below illustrates how this visual aid was presented to M. Mediation was presented for roughly five minutes. I asked M questions about the words he remembered and which category they belonged to. Once all the sixteen words had been elicited and recorded, a further three trials were completed. During trials seven and eight, I noticed M worked differently, showing more concentration and attention to the task and using strategies to aid recall, such as talking to himself. M worked more systematically than before, placing the words into their designated categories. He recalled the words quickly and precisely, however, on each occasion could only recall eleven words maximum. This mediation appeared to help M visualise that there were four categories.

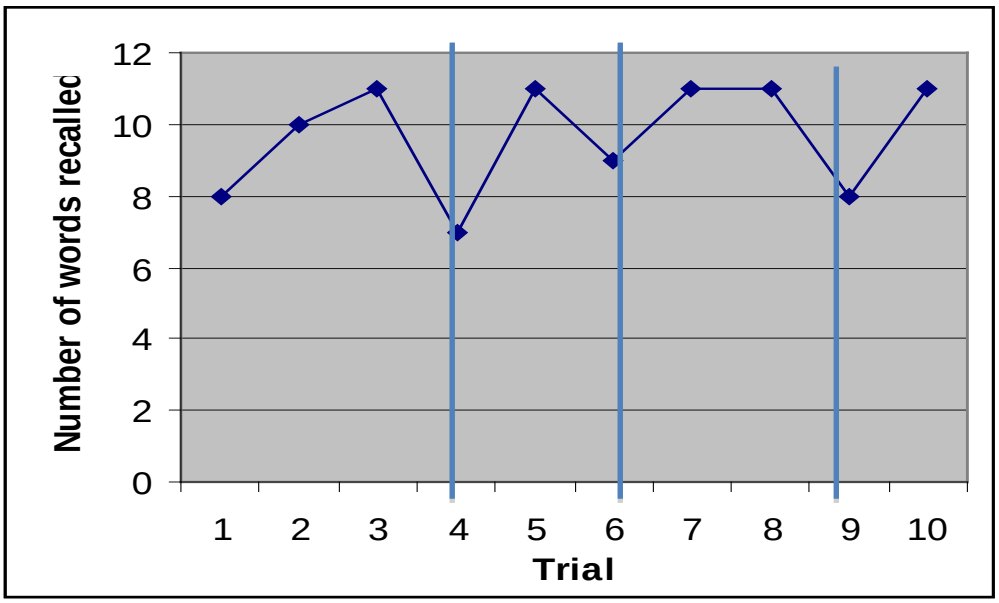
Table 1.

Carrots **Pepper** **Cucumber** **Tomato**	**Horse** **Cat** **Dog** **House**
Pencil **Sharpener** **Rubber** **Pen**	**Skirt** **Trousers** **Shirt** **Dress**

There was a one hour break between the next trial and M appeared to forget the previous strategy of categorisation to aid his recall. During this trial M's responses were impulsive and as a consequence he made frequent repetitions. For the tenth and final recall, the task was further simplified for M, as he had not successfully recalled all sixteen words. Therefore, the clothes category was omitted from the test and M was asked to recall twelve words. Prior to this final trial M was presented with a further visual aid similar to previous mediation, to illustrate the different word categories. M managed to recall eleven of the twelve words and all words recalled were given in categories.

The graph shown in Figure 1 below shows the number of words M recalled during ten successive trials, the vertical intersecting lines indicate when mediation was given to M. The implications of these findings suggest that M requires adult support and explanation of how to approach tasks through both verbal and visual means. The findings also suggest that M recalls and processes information best immediately after receiving adult support. Therefore, M will require intensive and periodic adult support to access his learning.

Figure 1.



The Organisation of Dots Test assesses the pupil's ability to organise and establish a series of visual relationships and produce simple geometric figures. In this test, the pupil is asked to organise a series of dots into two shapes; a square and a triangle. This organisation is conducted by drawing lines to connect the dots to make the required shapes. The test includes individual frames of dots that contain the exact number required needed to form the shapes; therefore each dot can be used only once. As the pupil works through the test, the test becomes more complex, for example, the frames include more dots (shapes) and the dots overlap and become rotated.

The Organisation of Dots Test assesses the following cognitive functions: systematic searching, comparison, planning, conservation, knowledge of shapes, counting and the propensity to act impulsively.

In this test, M was able to name the shapes, triangle and square; however, he could not tell me the properties of the shapes. I explained that the dot needed to be connected by lines to form the shapes. M's response to this task was slow but precise; he joined the dots up correctly on all singular shapes and completed six shapes each minute. M's approach was cautious and he regularly looked at me for reassurance that he was completing the task appropriately. As the test became more complex and the shapes started to overlap, M found it increasingly difficult to decipher which dots formed which shapes, he attempted some frames but left squares unfinished or produced shapes that were not specific to the test. I therefore intervened and modelled the completion of two overlapping shapes, first by explaining verbally and then visually by using my finger as a guide.

After this initial mediation M responded impulsively, joining the dots without looking for the shapes, there was no planning in his approach and he ignored the rules of how to complete the task. I intervened and mediated again, I repeated the rule, four dots means the shape has four sides and is a square and asked him to count the dots when he attempted to complete the shapes. I repeated this before M attempted each frame, and M could not complete the task successfully and continued to have difficulty finding the shapes. So I modelled how to complete the shapes by joining up the dots and explaining the sequence as I completed the shape, I also referred to the modelled shape at the start of the test and encouraged M to copy this shape for size and form.

M correctly completed two frames with two overlapping shapes, I mediated through asking questions such as; "That's right...how did you know it was right?" M responded by saying "Dot to dot" and could not elaborate any further. I enquired about the process M was using

to complete the shapes with the intention of consolidating M's processing. I asked M "What should you do first?" and "How can you find out what to do next?" M was able to give a rudimentary commentary of how to complete the task.

I asked M to talk through the process of completing each frame. I modelled this process first by taking one dot at a time, and verbalising my problem solving strategy. M copied me and his processing was very slow, he made persistent mistakes and received continual reminders of rules that governed the test. It is my opinion that M found this test too overwhelming, as there was too much information for him to process. Prior to finishing the test, M needed prompts to concentrate on small aspects of the task, such as looking at the dots. He appeared to forget previous instructions and impulsively committed pencil to paper, and reverted to guessing even after repeated modelling and repetition of mediation. M displayed good persistence and motivation to continue. Overall, I felt M did not understand this test and his understanding may have been hampered by his difficulties in accessing the language involved in the task.

In summary, findings from the Dynamic Assessment tests indicate that M has the motivation and perseverance to learn, and engages more readily when language is simplified and when he is given time to think and respond. M learns best when he is presented with small chunks of information and when a multi-sensory approach is modelled. Moreover, M responds best immediately after adult mediation has been given. Findings from the Dynamic Assessments indicate that M has difficulties with his working memory. Working memory difficulties can lead to complications in performing tasks that require information to be manipulated whilst you perform another task, for example responding to more than one instruction at a time or recalling the letters of a word whilst you attempt to blend them together.

Overall, M responded positively to mediation but his difficulties in accessing and understanding language meant that he offered minimal elaboration. It is therefore my opinion that M's understanding and limited use of language act as a significant barrier to accessing and developing learning opportunities. M will therefore require frequent adult intervention to access learning and develop more systematic ways of working.

Communication and interaction skills

Staff at G Primary School report that M has made little progress in his speech. M's speech is conveyed either using single words or very short and simple sentences containing three or four words. Mrs L reports that M lacks the vocabulary to converse on the same level as his peers and has difficulty comprehending and accessing much of the language that occurs within the curriculum. It is my opinion that M's language difficulties and limited vocabulary knowledge are a reflection of the cultural differences and experiences that exist between the school and home environment.

Miss P reports that M speaks Romany at home, as this is the preferred language that his family and friends use.

During the assessments I conducted in November 2010 and April 2011 I noticed that M had difficulty understanding a great deal of my instructions, for instance, if I asked M to perform more than one instruction at a time, he would consistently forget the second or third instruction and only attend to the first. Furthermore, from my observations during the assessment work I conducted with M I noticed that his expressive language skills were underdeveloped. For example, M rarely spoke more than two words at a time. In answering the question, "What do you enjoy about school?" M responded, "Do work" and when I asked the question again, M responded by saying, "Have playtime." M's responses highlighted the need to allow him some thinking time in order to process his responses, particularly in listening and talking activities (auditory-verbal), and to ensure he is not presented with too much auditory information at one time.

To summarise, the information gathered from assessments suggest that M has significant difficulties understanding and using spoken and written English language. Evidently, this means that he will have difficulties in following discussions or instructions that are either not familiar to him or too complex or detailed in nature, and unexpected or out of context. Therefore, M's restricted comprehension of language and vocabulary acts as a significant barrier to learning within a formal curriculum.

Educational attainment and rates of progress

M's most recent educational attainment was assessed at G Primary School in June 2010 during the end of Key Stage One Teacher assessments and these indicate M is working at P-Scale Levels across all subjects. M is currently at P5 for Reading, P5 for Writing, P7 for Speaking and Listening, P5 for Numeracy and P7 for Science. This is significantly below the level that is expected for pupils in M's age range. G Primary School staff indicate that M has made extremely slow progress in spite of the support he has received. M is still at the emergent writing stage and developing his number skills. M is in the lowest ability group and currently receives support for his learning that is differentiated by task, outcome and adult support. A more detailed report of M's attainment levels will be contained within the Educational Advice.

Social, emotional and behavioural development

M is described by staff at G Primary School as a popular boy who plays cooperatively with other pupils in Year 3. M prefers physical play and regularly is involved in a game of football during playtimes. M's interaction skills are described as limited; where he uses little language to socialise with others but his peers still appear to relate to him. M is also described as a confident and happy child but can also have the occasional day where he can become tearful. In terms of behaviour, M is described by staff at G Primary School as a polite, well-behaved child, who can on occasions be easily led by others.

Miss P reports that M is a well-behaved, happy and very helpful boy who gets on well with other children. M is also reported as being protective of his older sister, who he has a very close relationship with.

During my individual work with M on 23/11/2011 and 7/4/2011 I found him to be a polite, contented and pleasant young man who was happy to interact and talk about a topic that interests him.

To summarise, M is a popular and well behaved boy who is developing his interaction skills. However, M has limited social and communication skills that prevent him from developing his peer relations further and therefore will require the support to help develop his speaking and listening skills.

Independence and self-help skills

M's Class Teacher, Mrs L reports that M can work independently with a group of children when given adult instructions; for instance, he regularly uses the Interactive Whiteboard in a group without adult supervision. However, M struggles organising the materials needed to commence learning activities without adult assistance. Mrs L also reports that M requires adult assistance, such as visual modelling to help him share his ideas in verbal and written forms.

Miss P reports that M can dress and wash himself without assistance. M will brush his teeth and comb his hair without prompting. Miss P reports that M is learning lots of life skills outside school.

To summarise, M requires adult support and guidance to help organise his resources and record his ideas so he can access and engage with the formal curriculum in school. However, out of school, M has successfully developed his life skills and is becoming an independent young man.

Physical development and health

Staff at G Primary School have no concerns regarding M's physical development or health. M is described as a boy who has good motor skills and is good at playing football. Miss P reported that M is a very active boy who enjoys being outside, running and playing different sports such as football and bat and ball games. M is also reported to like climbing trees. Miss P reported that M is rarely ill and has no concerns about his health or physical development.

From my observations I noticed that M had good fine motor skills and he used a dynamic tripod grip to write and mark make.

M's views

During individual work with M at G Primary School on 23/11/10 and 7/4/201, M appeared proud to tell me about the things he likes to do both at school and at home. M informed me that he likes quad bikes, motorbikes and cars and also dogs and horses. M told me that he thinks he is good at drawing and playing football but needs more help with his reading, writing and numbers. M told me that he enjoys school and has lots of friends.

Parental views

During the parental interview on 28/04/2011, Miss P stated that she would like M to get the help he needs so he can make the most of his education and reach his potential.

Summary of Special Educational Needs

M is a Romany traveller who is a polite, well-behaved and caring boy. He enjoys attending school and playing football. M's interests include quad bikes, cars, horses and dogs; reflecting his socio-cultural background and heritage. Academically, M is currently working significantly below levels expected at his age. M has significant difficulties understanding and using spoken and written English language, which have a significant impact on him accessing the formal curriculum. As a consequence M has significant delays in his reading, writing and understanding of number. Overall, M will require a highly differentiated approach with intensive multi-sensory support and mediation to access all areas of the curriculum and to enable him to stay focused, engaged and motivated to learn.

Aims of Provision

The aims of any provision made for M should be as follows:

1) To develop M's receptive and expressive language through building his vocabulary use and knowledge; so that he is able to access all learning opportunities

2) To develop M's basic Literacy and Numeracy skills

3) To further develop M's communication and social interaction skills

4) To develop strategies to improve M's memory skills

5) To develop M's planning and problem solving skills

Educational facilities

In order to meet M's special educational needs, the following educational facilities and resources need to be put in place:

1) M will need support to develop his receptive and expressive language skills.

- Support should be given through regular exposure to adult-led speaking and listening activities delivered on an individual, small group and whole class basis; to ensure M has opportunities to develop his expressive language and build his vocabulary. Word building exercises, matching games and practising conversations through role play will be suitable methods to support these skills, ensuring any intervention is accessible to M's level of understanding.

- M will require visual aids to help support him to access language within the curriculum, through the use of photographs and pictures.

- Ensure M is given opportunities to talk about his learning experiences as they occur.

- For the school to treat M as an English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupil. Any progress will need to be assessed in relation to M's cultural background and the opportunities he has to experience English language. M will need access to pre-learning exercises that introduce new language before it is presented to whole class situations, in addition to opportunities to review new vocabulary on a daily basis to aid his understanding.

- M's language development will need close monitoring and review through the specialist support of a Speech and Language Therapist.

2) M will need support to develop his basic Literacy and Numeracy skills, this support should include:

- Targeted and differentiated, daily teaching from the support of an adult to ensure there are opportunities to gradually build up his sight word vocabulary, so his letter and number recognition and reproduction becomes automatic and fluent over time. The use of a structured and multi-sensory phonics programme such as Read Write Inc would be suitable for developing M's Literacy skills, and the Numicon Intervention Programme would be suitable for developing M's Numeracy skills.

- The use of ICT to enhance learning through multi-sensory teaching

- A paired reading approach and daily planned opportunities to practise and consolidate reading and writing skills.

- The use of a Direct Instruction approach to teaching, which involves sight reading of specific language.

- The use of a Precision Teaching approach to monitor and evaluate what is being taught is appropriate for M's needs. Precision Teaching offers strategies for carrying out brief, daily assessments of pupil performance and progress, and to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching approaches. Its focus is on establishing fluency, accuracy and mastery to enable a skill to be performed without hesitation, which in turn is less likely to be forgotten.

3) M will need support to develop his communication and social interaction skills, this support should include:

- The delivery of a scheduled weekly social skills programme, within a small group setting will be required to help M develop perquisite social skills. A programme such as Time to Talk by Alison Schroeder would be a suitable intervention for this purpose. Further information regarding this resource can be found in the Northamptonshire Shoebox.

4) M will need support to develop his short-term memory and processing skills, this support should include:

- A teaching approach that provides instructions and directions in short, simplified language, ensuring M has time to process and respond to what he is being asked to do. It is my opinion M works best when presented with one short instruction at a time. Both written and spoken sentences that are shorter will produce less demand on M's memory and processing skills and ensure there is a greater likelihood he will access the curriculum.

- Adult-led pre-teaching and post-teaching sessions that emphasise over learning, repetition and consolidation of information where links between new and previous learning should be made explicit. M will require adult scaffolding and modelling that follows a test-teach-test approach.

- Adult-led multi-sensory support and mediation to help M to categorise and chunk information to aid retention and recall. Ensuring M has opportunities to respond to mediation immediately after support is given to improve the likelihood of successful recall and reduce forgetting of previously learnt information.

- Opportunities to engage in play-based learning activities that focus on improving memory and processing skills, such as `Snap` and matching pairs.

5) M will benefit from intensive adult support to develop his planning and problem solving skills. This support should include:

- The use of games, puzzles, IT programmes to develop M's logical reasoning skills

- Reducing M's impulsivity by teaching problem solving skills and encouraging him to think through how he can approach a task and organise information to generate a solution before putting pen to paper, for example, through the use of writing frames.

- Adult-support to model and scaffold the sequence of learning activities by breaking them down into their constituent parts and discussing ways to complete the task; with an emphasis on what needs to done next. The use of visual aids and prompts will need to be used to support this process and make it accessible to M.

Any planning to support M's needs will need to consider and show awareness to M's interests, experiences and cultural background. It will be helpful to develop resources and learning materials associated with M's cultural heritage to help him attribute some personal relevance, meaning and connection to his learning.

To ensure M and his family receive support from the Traveller Specialist Teacher Service.

M's special educational needs should be reviewed regularly. M and his parents should be included in the target setting, monitoring and review process.

Signed : Date: 25/5/2011
Will Cross, Trainee Educational Psychologist

Countersigned: Date: 25/05/2011

RE, Senior Educational Psychologist

Appendix 5: Dynamic assessment materials used for this case study

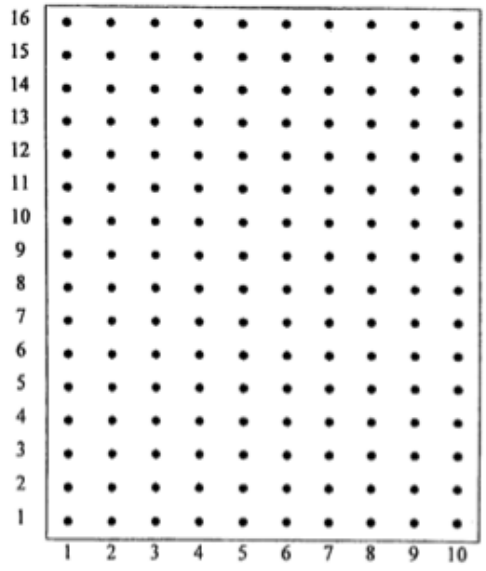
THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR THE
ENHANCEMENT OF LEARNING POTENTIAL

Founder & Director: Prof. Reuven Feuerstein

16 Word Memory Test (with categorization)

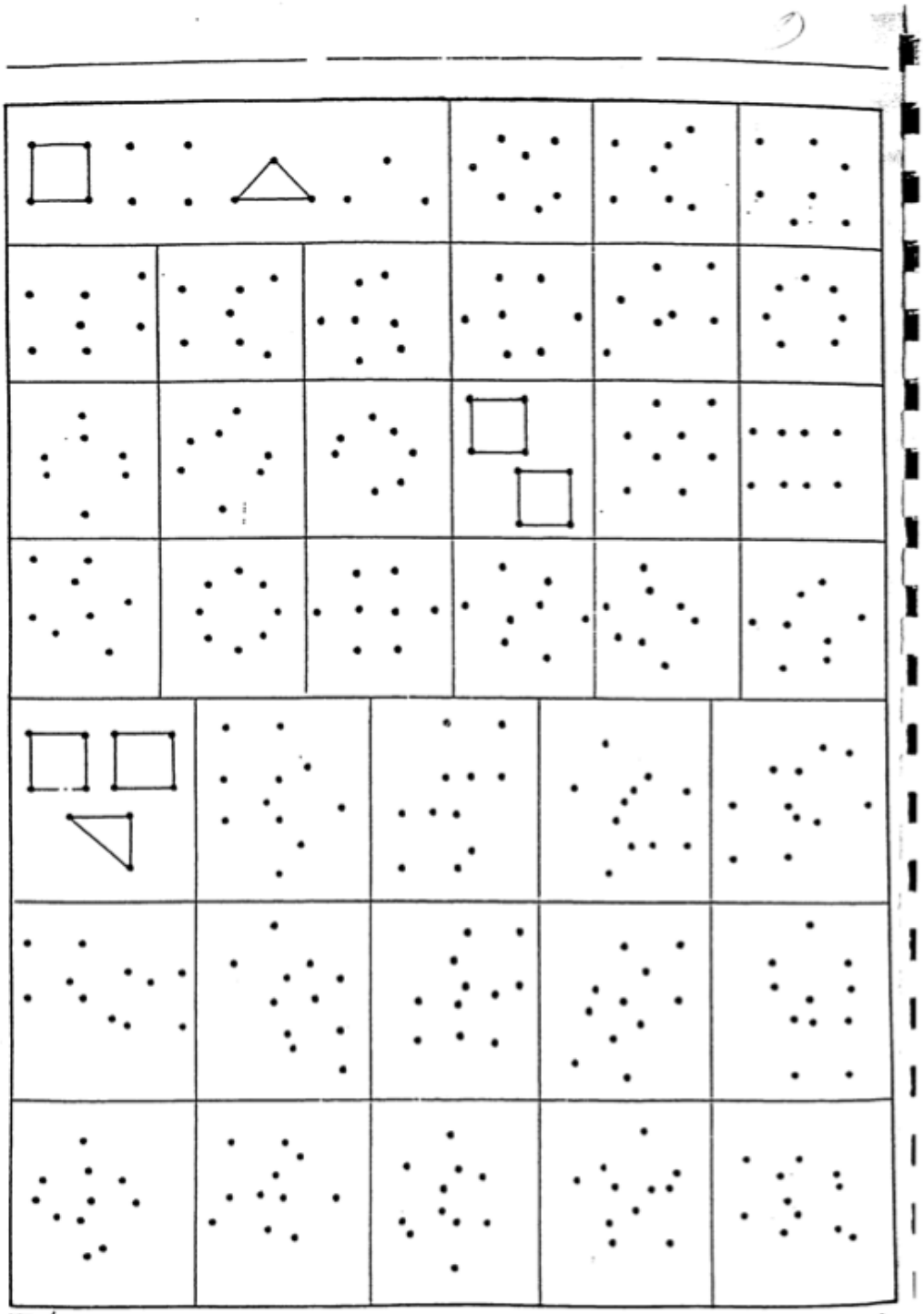
Name: _____ Date: _____

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. ~~Pants~~ Trousers										
2. Carrot										
3. Sharpener										
4. Horse										
5. Dress										
6. Tomato										
7. Pen										
8. Dog										
9. Shirt										
10. Cucumber										
11. Pencil										
12. Cat										
13. Skirt										
14. Pepper										
15. ~~Eraser~~ Rubber										
16. Mouse										
Intervention										



Comments:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Repetitious:										
Wrong:										



Organisation de points d'A.REY

Appendix 6: Examples of mediation used in the assessment process

16 Word Memory Test

- Tell me how you remembered the words?
- What do you need to do next to remember the words?
- Can you find a way to remember the words better?
- Put the words together in groups
- Tell me how you did that?
- What do you think would happen if....?
- How do you feel if...?
- Yes, that's right, but how did you know it was right?
- When is another time you need to...?

The Organisation of Dots

- Stop and look carefully at what you're doing
- What do you think the problem is?
- Can you think of another way we could do this?
- Where have you done that before to help you solve a problem?
- Let's make a plan so we don't miss anything
- How can you find that out?
- How is.....different/like from.....?
- Yes, that's right, but how did you know it was right?
- What must you do first and how can you find out what to do next?

Doctorate In Applied Educational and Child Psychology (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D.

Postgraduate Training in Educational Psychology

Should therapeutic work in schools be within the existing remit of Educational Psychology practice? An exemplar using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Will Cross 1060365

29.4.13

Chapter 4: Should therapeutic work in schools be within the existing remit of Educational Psychology practice? An exemplar using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Abstract

Within the last decade there has been a renaissance of interest associated with Educational Psychologists (EPs) working therapeutically as part of their service delivery to schools. By placing the EP role within the current socio-political and economic context of shrinking Local Authority budgets and new variants of EP Service delivery models, questions arose regarding whether EPs have the capacity within their already broad working remit to conduct 'pure' therapeutic work. Drawing on extant research in this area and reflections gathered from an exemplar using a CBT group intervention within a secondary school, this paper sought to look at the barriers and facilitators of EPs working therapeutically in schools, to illuminate whether this way of working should be within the existing remit of EPs practice.

Findings suggested the barriers to EPs working therapeutically are capacity and time to plan and deliver the 'therapeutic' interventions, in addition to accessing specialist supervision; especially when placed in context with the already broad remit of the EP's role including: consultation, research, assessment, intervention and training. Conversely, possible facilitators were identified as an EP's distinctive contribution and unique understanding of underlying psychological concepts, and working within an EP service that provides commissioned therapeutic work to schools. Further implications for EPs working therapeutically are discussed.

Introduction

This paper focuses on a reflective account of agreeing, planning and implementing a therapeutic group intervention within a secondary school. The therapeutic group work focused on developing a bespoke package for year 7 and 8 children described as 'pessimistic thinkers' by the participating school staff and the intervention applied principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). The work was undertaken as part of my second year professional practice as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) and was the product of negotiations between the Educational Psychology Service and a school where I was the link Educational Psychologist (EP).

The group work described within this assignment is used as an exemplar to consider whether therapeutic work in schools should be within the existing remit of Educational Psychology practice, taking into account the prevailing time pressures and already broad nature of the modern EP role. For instance do EPs have the capacity to practice 'pure' therapeutic work or provide appropriate and ongoing therapeutic supervision to support this particular type of intervention within their services?

At the time of writing, there appears to be a renaissance of interest and attention associated with EPs working therapeutically as part of their service delivery to schools. In a recent UK-wide survey conducted by Atkinson et al., (2011) it was reported that 92% of 455 responses from TEPs and EPs indicated that they use therapeutic interventions as part of their current

practice. The findings suggested that the use of these therapeutic interventions is wide-ranging and used across a variety of contexts with a varied client base. Atkinson et al., (2011) concluded that the use of therapeutic interventions appears to feature more in EP practice now than in the past (p.6).

Moreover, in 2007 MacKay argued that EPs are a key therapeutic resource for children and young people (CYP) in schools and can make a significant and distinctive contribution to supporting this group of CYP and contexts by working therapeutically; a position that has been supported by Farrell et al., (2006) in the last review of the functions and contributions of EPs.

However, in acknowledging the historical grounding of EPs and their role in therapeutic work, there is a need to contextualise this in relation to the contemporary and changing social, political, economic and educational climate of EP service delivery and new age of austerity that brings with it shrinking school budgets and Local Authority cuts, including a reduction in the size of EP services.

The result of these widespread changes have led to a change in the way Educational Psychology Services (EPS) are organised in delivering their services to schools and what type of service they may offer (AEP, 2011). These changes bring with them both risks, for example, having the capacity to deliver the services, and opportunities, creating greater flexibility in which

to deliver an increased variety of services. These issues will be further discussed in relation to EP's scope to work therapeutically in schools.

The assignment will begin with a review of literature that focuses on EPs role within therapeutic work, with a particular focus on the use of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Barriers and enabling factors to EPs working therapeutically will be presented and discussed and set in context of recent changes in EPS delivery models and the changing face of the EP role and practice. The present study's aims and purposes will be introduced and used as an exemplar to investigate whether therapeutic work within schools should be within the usual remit of EP practice. Following this, anecdotal evidence will form the presentation of findings. The assignment continues with a discussion of key findings, which are related to extant research pertaining to the EP role and working therapeutically in schools. The barriers and enabling factors are presented and further implications for EPs working therapeutically in schools are discussed. The assignment concludes with recommendations for future EP therapeutic practice.

Literature review

What is therapy?

In discussing the term 'therapeutic' it is important to distinguish it from 'non-therapeutic.' Therefore for the purposes of this assignment the following definition has been adopted to distinguish these terms.

For an intervention to be viewed as 'therapeutic' it is intended to be used or

applied to relieve, heal or treat a mental or psychological disorder by psychological means (Stallard, 2002b). A CBT therapeutic intervention can therefore lead to positive change in one or more of the areas of thinking, feeling or behaving.

Furthermore, it is important to distinguish the difference between 'therapy' per se and the term 'therapeutic.' Therapy is an umbrella term to suggest that there is a healing quality. It is usually used to refer to 'pure' models of intervention (Stallard, 2005) and includes the core principles of the model espoused and retains fidelity to this model. Whereas 'therapeutic' does not carry the same meaning as therapy, as therapeutic interventions do not necessarily conform to 'pure' models and may include elements of the model espoused. In the current study, the focus is on the EP's role in conducting 'pure' therapeutic work within schools.

Therapy, however, in EPs work may be more loosely conceived, as therapeutic, per se, can be viewed on a spectrum ranging from 'pure' therapy to approaches that involve or implement some element from a therapeutic approach. For example, according to Atkinson et al., (2013) EPs use CBT ideas and approaches such as Socratic Questioning within their daily practice when working with individual CYP, or use Solution Focused questioning within their consultations with clients and this could be argued to be a form of therapeutic approach as opposed to 'therapy' in the true sense of the word.

Educational Psychologists and therapeutic work

A key focus of this assignment is Educational Psychologists (EPs) role within therapeutic work and there is an increasing acknowledgement and accompanying body of knowledge suggesting that EPs are involved within therapeutic interventions as part of their working practices. Atkinson et al., (2011) found that from a sample of 455 EPs and Trainee EPs (TEPs), 82.9% used therapeutic interventions as individual casework and 54.9% within group work. The most popular therapeutic interventions reported as being used by TEPs and EPs was Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) (84.1%) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) (63.4%) and the most popular client groups where these therapeutic interventions were focused were young people in secondary schools (77.1%). In summary, Atkinson et al, (2011) report that EPs are engaging in a wide range of therapeutic interventions across a range of contexts and with a variety of clients (p.11).

The noticeable popularity of EPs using CBT as a therapeutic intervention with young people in schools became a focus within this assignment.

What is CBT?

CBT is an eclectic group of techniques that combine strategies from cognitive and behavioural psychology, (Rait et al., 2010). It has been described as a psychotherapeutic intervention (Stallard, 2002a) that seeks to facilitate change by focusing on the interrelationships of cognition, emotion and behaviour. Therefore, there is an assumption that how we feel (emotions)

and what we do (behaviour) are by-products of what/how we think (Cognition).

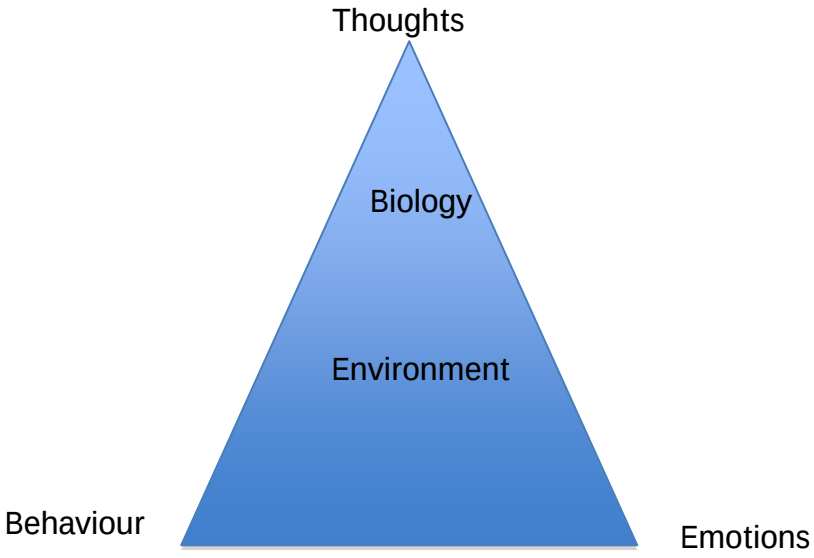


Figure 1: *The interrelationships of factors involved in CBT*

Furthermore, other factors such as a person's biology or environment in which they act are also seen as important influencing factors in determining how one thinks or behaves. For example, facilitating change in a person's behaviour or thinking could affect their emotional state. Likewise, exercising or living in poverty may also effect one's emotions, behaviour or cognitions.

During a CBT session the therapist aims to help the client to understand the interrelated links between their thoughts, feelings and behaviours through an analysis of the 'problems' they experience each day, with an intention of helping the client find and distinguish helpful ways of thinking and behaving to facilitate change in the 'here and now' (Gilbert, 2009, p.400). Therefore the core principle in CBT is that the client's faulty thinking style leads to negative

feelings and behaviour (Greig, 2007, p.20), and interventions that focus on developing more rational and positive thinking styles will bring about positive changes in the client's emotional state and behaviour (Beck 1976).

Why a rise in CBT practices with children and young people?

Within the last decade, there has been an increased acknowledgement of mental health difficulties among children and young people and how this affects their functioning in schools and communities (Meltzer, et al., 2000 and Mackay, 2007). The government agenda 'Mental Health: Everyone's Business' (DfES, 2001) highlighted the responsibility of all practitioners to work together to support the mental well being of this cohort and over time CBT has developed the strongest evidence base for its application to mental health difficulties which has led to an initial resurgence in the application of CBT (Squires, 2010).

Furthermore, in 2005, Layard called for an increase in trained personnel and early intervention through the use of CBT as part of the IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) programme (DoH, 2007) as there were believed to be insufficient professionals working in mental health who were trained to deliver CBT as a therapeutic intervention. The Layard initiative was prompted by an economical analysis designed to treat those suffering from depression or anxiety who were long-term absentees from work and claiming benefits to help them regain control in their life and return back to employment (Layard et al., 2007).

The Layard initiative is not without its critics. According to Marzillier and Hall (2009) the initiative is predicated on a naïve or 'illness' view of mental health, commonly referred to as the medical model, which overlooks key influencing factors that are known to contribute to mental health difficulties, such as social and economic factors like poverty. The initiative also presents an overly optimistic assessment of how mental health difficulties can be 'cured' through 'treatment' from a therapeutic intervention.

Nevertheless, the heightened profile of CBT in dealing with adult mental health difficulties has culminated in a rise in popularity in its application to children and young people, so much so that Greig (2007) suggests over time CBT has become the 'treatment choice' for child and adolescent mental health difficulties (p.19) and recommended as the 'favoured' therapeutic approach by the NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) guidelines and the most evidence-based approach for 'treating' anxiety and depression related symptoms. Further, scholars also claim there is evidence to support its effective application in children and young people's mental health difficulties (Fonagy, et al., 2002). Moreover, there are a growing number of interventions applying CBT principles that have been adapted to meet the developmental needs of children and young people in schools, such as 'Think Good, Feel Good' by Stallard (2002a and 2005); 'Exploring Feelings' (Attwood, 2004); 'Friends for Life' (Barrett, 2005) and 'Stop, Think, Do' (Miller, 2004).

Alongside these apparent 'off the shelf' resources that can be used in schools to support children and young people, there is still a need for professionals with the expertise and understanding of underlying psychological theory to become involved in 'pure' therapeutic work using models such as CBT because of the significant rise and growing prevalence of complex mental health difficulties experienced by children and young people. Such a rise according to Rait et al., (2010) has seen greater EP involvement in therapeutic work using approaches such as CBT that it is now not perceived as the 'sole preserve' of CAMHS, counsellors or therapists (p.105).

Therapeutic work in EP practice

In 2007 the British Psychological Society (BPS) published a special issue of Educational and Child Psychology journal that focused on therapeutic work within EP practice. In this journal MacKay and Greig (2007) called for greater EP involvement in such work, citing the profession's unique and crucial knowledge, skills and expertise to work therapeutically with young people in schools.

Further research conducted by Squires (2010) suggested EPs are well placed to deliver therapeutic interventions in schools and noted the following factors to support this assertion:

- EPs have an understanding of the needs of children and young people
- EPs have an implicit understanding and appreciation of educational contexts
- EPs are flexible in their working practices

- EPs have a broad (psychological) based training background, including the delivery of counselling skills and undertaking regular CPD to support the embedding of these skills
- EPs are regularly involved in capacity building skills through cascading 'psychological knowledge' when working in partnership/collaboratively with other adults. (p.280)

There are also numerous studies that suggest EPs have applied CBT as part of their therapeutic work with young people or cite CBT as a viable therapeutic intervention to be used in EPs work (Squires and Dunsmuir, 2011; Rait, et al., 2010; Greig, 2007; MacKay, 2007), with Squires (2001) suggesting CBT can improve the quality of peer relationships when used as a therapeutic group-based intervention.

Within the present study CBT was chosen and applied as a group intervention over an individual case study for similar reasons espoused by Squires (2001); however, in addition to improving the quality of peer relationships by implementing CBT within a group there were also opportunities for participants to collaborate, share and model the principles of this approach and develop the skills, ideas and strategies needed to generalise them outside the sessions, something that would not have been possible using a case-study approach.

Despite its success, CBT is not without its limitations as a therapeutic intervention. Dunsmuir and Iyaduria (2007) suggest the evidence base is not convincing for CBT, pointing to the fact that a key limitation of the approach is that it originates from work conducted with adults and may be developmentally inappropriate for children to access, particularly the issue of terminology and whether CBT is linguistically understandable for a younger cohort. This last point has been echoed by Rait et al., (2010), who also suggest the following criticisms of CBT:

- A lack of information and evidence of how faulty styles of thinking develop
- Young people have limited control to set up and test their cognitions in the real word
- There is a need for meta-cognition and high level of self-awareness that may be beyond the skill of a young person.

According to Atkinson et al., (2013) a further criticism associated with the involvement of EPs in therapeutic interventions is that the majority of published work in this area is based on purposive and self-selecting samples of EPs who have a positive disposition towards their role in delivering this type of work in schools, and as such is not the view held by all EPs (p.65).

The Barriers and facilitators to EPs working therapeutically within their practice

Research conducted by Anderson (2012) investigated EPs experiences of implementing therapeutic interventions and findings suggest that there are many challenges to working therapeutically, including time constraints in delivering work and inadequate training and supervision. This raises serious implications for EPs working therapeutically within their daily practice.

It is therefore suggested that in order for EPs to work therapeutically whether as their 'core' work or as a discrete piece of traded work, there is a need to ensure their practice meets the minimum expected standards needed to be competent in working therapeutically (Roth and Pilling, 2007).

According to Roth and Pilling (2007, p.12) the basic minimum standards that need fulfilling for delivering therapeutic work such as CBT includes the following:

- Knowledge of basic principles of CBT and rationale for treatment
- Ability to explain and demonstrate rationale for CBT to client
- Ability to structure sessions: adhering to an agreed agenda, to plan and review practice
- Ability to use measures and self-monitoring to guide therapy and monitor outcomes
- Developing hypotheses about a maintenance cycle
- Ability to problem solve
- Ability to end therapy in a planned manner

One way EPs could monitor whether they are fulfilling these minimum standards and professional competence is through effective supervision (Atkinson, et al., 2013); as engaging in supervision provides opportunities to monitor the expertise of the professional, and fidelity to the model or theory espoused. Conversely, not accessing specialist supervision could act as a barrier to engaging in therapeutic working practices (Holland, 2006, in Squires, 2010).

Squires and Dunsmuir, (2011) found that accessing good quality supervision from someone who is experienced in delivering therapeutic work is regarded as highly important to TEPs to ensure that therapeutic work is conducted successfully, safely and ethically. Furthermore, it is also recognised that if EPs are going to offer therapeutic services to schools, they need a specialised level of supervision beyond the generic supervision provided in their services (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010), to develop their existing therapeutic skills base and working knowledge of such approaches. Moreover, supervised practice is perceived as an essential component of psychotherapy training (Pretorius, 2006, p.413).

Since 2009 when the then HPC (Health Professional Council) became the regulatory body for practising psychologists within the UK, there has been a statutory requirement for EPs to engage in regular supervision to ensure both quality control and quality assurance that they display competence in praxis.

Within the HCPC's Standards of Proficiency, standard 2c.2 stipulates, *'psychologists must understand models of supervision and their contribution to practice'* (HCPC, 2012, p.25).

When considering therapeutic supervision, Liese and Alford (1998) suggest a CBT supervision session should typically follow the following structure:

Checking in
Setting the agenda
Bridging from the previous supervision session
Enquiring about previously supervised cases
Reviewing homework (thoughts or behaviour experiments)
Prioritising of agenda items
Discussing individual cases
Using direct instruction and guided discovery
Using standardised supervision instruments
Assigning new homework
Summarising and eliciting feedback from the supervisee

Figure 2: A recommended structure for a CBT supervision session, after Liese and Alford (1998)

Liese and Alford's (1998) model corresponds closely to Roth and Pilling's (2007) suggestions on providing specialised supervision when conducting CBT. In reviewing this model it is questionable whether such a thorough and time consuming model of supervision could be delivered within an EPS on a

regular and on-going basis, especially considering other commitments and responsibilities undertaken in 'routine' service delivery.

However, Atkinson, et al., (2011) found evidence from a UK-wide survey to suggest supervision was not perceived as a barrier by EPs and TEPs to engaging in therapeutic work, although service capacity and other priorities identified by stakeholders, including casework and Statutory Assessment work were. These findings raise interesting questions regarding whether accessing therapeutic supervision is taken seriously by some EP services, or whether there is ample time to engage and complete quality supervision to support the delivery of therapeutic work.

There is a plethora of research that supports the view that EPS capacity and time constraints are barriers to TEPs and EPs working therapeutically (Farrell, et al., 2006; MacKay, 2007; Suldo et al., 2010; Squires and Dunsmuir, 2011, Atkinson et al., 2013). Rait et al., (2010) suggest it is unlikely EPs will be in a position to offer regular and direct CBT work to CYP due to the time constraints they work under, because the evidence base suggests successful CBT interventions run over a long-term period, lasting anywhere between 8 to 16 sessions (Layard, 2007). It is therefore inconceivable for EPs to be involved for this duration given their ongoing eclectic duties of consultation, research, assessment work, including their statutory role, interventions and training responsibilities.

Furthermore, Atkinson et al., (2013) suggest using school's time running therapeutic interventions may not be the most effective use of EP time (p.64), especially when a school has an array of complex case work that needs to be addressed. Moreover, even if EPs are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to offer regular therapeutic work in schools there is still a difficulty in seeing how they would be able to have the time and capacity to form a therapeutic alliance with each client; a prerequisite needed for the therapy to be successful (Stallard, 2002a). It is arguable therefore, that EPs may only have scope for a non-direct role in therapeutic working despite being well placed as applied psychologists to implement such practice. For example, it is unusual for EPs to work on lengthy direct 'therapeutic' interventions with clients due to their already broad remit and time constraints on their role as applied psychologists. It is however, feasible to consider EPs delivering training or conducting research in this area, to capacity build within the whole school as an organisation.

Conversely, there is evidence to counter the argument that working therapeutically is not within the existing parameters of EP practice. A survey by Atkinson et al., (2013) that investigated the role of EPs delivering therapeutic interventions to children and young people found that facilitators for EPs engaging in therapeutic interventions were access to therapeutic training, access to specialist supervision and a strong strategic commitment to deliver therapeutic interventions.

Research conducted by Atkinson et al., (2011) also looked at EPs/TEPs views on enabling factors and barriers to the use of therapeutic interventions, and findings suggested access to training, a service culture that supported therapeutic working and flexibility in the model of working (i.e. semi-traded/traded services) were facilitating factors for EPs engaging in therapeutic work.

Fallon et al., (2010) argued that 'trading services' offers opportunities for EPSs to expand the influence of the EP role beyond ring-fenced budgets and Atkinson, et al., (2013) suggest that EPSs offering therapeutic interventions may be an appealing commodity to schools within a commissioned service (p.64) but will need appropriate promotion and marketing to ensure it is a profitable venture, as research has suggested that schools are not always aware that EPs provide therapeutic work as part of their remit (Atkinson et al., (2011).

However, schools purchasing therapeutic work from EPSs raise ethical and logistical issues that have already discussed above, including the need for practitioners to meet competences and access regular specialist supervision HCPC, (2012) and regular opportunities to develop and embed these skills. There are also critics of these ideas, as Pugh (2010) suggests EPs may become marginalised as providers of therapeutic interventions if services become commissioned, as there are other health professionals who can

commit to the delivery of these services at more highly competitive rates for the commissioner (p.397).

Further evidence to support EPs' scope to engage in therapeutic work can be found in their psychological roots and the distinctive contribution they bring to working within the health profession, as reported by Farrell, et al., (2006). Farrell, et al., argued that EPs' psychological background and training places them in a good position to deliver therapeutic services to schools. Ashton and Roberts (2006) also pointed to the EPs' psychological knowledge as being something that sets them apart from other services. Likewise, Cameron (2006) wrote about *EPs adopting a psychological perspective to human problems* (p.292), where they use psychology in a creative and innovative way to make complexities more coherent. However, there is a criticism in reporting this as evidence for EPs working therapeutically, as all the evidence presented here is from an EP perspective and it could be argued as representing a biased view.

The present study's purposes

The purposes of the present study are to investigate whether therapeutic work in schools should be within the existing remit of EP practice. This question will be answered through the analysis of an exemplar using CBT within a six week bespoke therapeutic intervention and set against the barriers and facilitators associated with EPs engaging in therapeutic interventions in schools that have been introduced so far.

Original empirical fieldwork undertaken

The present study focused on the planning, implementation and dissemination of a bespoke CBT group intervention delivered in a secondary school. From conducting this work interesting questions were raised about whether EPs have the capacity to engage in, or have access to appropriate levels of supervision to practice therapeutic work. Therefore, this group intervention is used within the existing study as an exemplar and reflective account to answer the question, whether therapeutic work in schools should be within the existing remit of EP practice?

Background to the study

The existing work occurred as a result of a consultation between a school where I was the link EP and an EP with whom I shared the school. The school had identified a number of pupils who were described as 'pessimistic thinkers' (defined later on) and they wanted EPS involvement and advice with each pupil as individual pieces of casework. However, due to limited EP time available and also the school's limited time allocated remaining for the academic year, a group intervention was negotiated between the school and the EP.

The intended aims and purposes of delivering a CBT group intervention

There was a dual aim and purpose in delivering this CBT group intervention. Firstly the aim was to develop the participants' self-awareness and understanding of the inter-relationships between their thoughts, feelings and

behaviours (psycho-education), to facilitate positive change by empowering them to develop alternative and optimistic thinking skills.

A further aim was to capacity build through training a member of staff (co-deliverer), through modelling practice and having their involvement with the group intervention, in addition to, sharing materials so further CBT work could be implemented 'in-house' within the school. The purpose having the 'additional adult' was to share the psychological underpinnings of the intervention through regular contact. Because it was not essentially a 'pure' therapeutic model that was being advocated, a Teaching Assistant (TA) was selected for this role. Although not a trained psychologist, the TA had opportunities to learn the key principles (psycho-education) underlying the intervention. The purpose of the intervention, therefore, was to 'give the psychology away' (McKay, 2007). Further consideration regarding the use of the additional adult and non-psychologist in capacity building is given in the findings and discussion sections.

I chose a group intervention that promoted psychological principles of CBT because the theory aligns with my own epistemological viewpoint of how individuals' construct personal meaning from their social worlds through language and how this influences their emotions and the way they act.

The sample and rationale for their inclusion in the therapeutic intervention

The pupils who participated within the group intervention were selected by the school SENCo and Inclusion Manager on the basis that they presented as 'pessimistic thinkers.' This term was used by the school staff to include pupils

who had negative peer relationships, negative self-perceptions, poor self-regulation skills and those who were displaying self-negating behaviours. Narrative feedback from the young people, suggested that the majority demonstrated negative self-perceptions or experienced difficulties in school due to their emotional or behavioural responses with other people. A CBT approach was therefore chosen as a group intervention to focus on developing the young people's thinking skills through cognitive restructuring and reframing exercises and to teach the young people the impact that positive thinking can have on how they feel and respond in these challenging or difficult situations.

Six pupils were selected, 3 from Year 7 and 3 from Year 8. There were 5 males and 1 female. All pupils attended the same secondary school and had no previous involvement from the EPS. The pupils were also selected on the basis of being able to discuss and share their thoughts (meta-cognitive skills) within a group forum and listen to others' ideas.

The procedure

The procedure of planning, running and disseminating the intervention followed a process of identification (ensuring there was a need and the intervention was tailored to the specific needs of the young people attending the group), formulation (working hypotheses used to inform the intervention of how faulty thinking styles may have developed), assessment (through pre-assessments), the intervention (running a six-week CBT group) and

evaluation (the impact of pupils accessing the CBT group through post assessments and anecdotal reports); all of which is further explained.

Identification and negotiating the EP role in running the group

Following the decision to provide a group CBT intervention, ethical consideration was given and followed the protocol described in The British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009). This included gaining written parental consent for the young people to participate, which was sought and gained by the school SENCo. Parents of those children involved in the CBT group were also briefed about what the group would entail by the school SENCo, following close information sharing and liaison between the EPS. After parental consent was agreed, participants were given information regarding what the group would focus on from myself and school staff gained their written assent through a consent form devised by the EP team. All pupils were also made aware of their right to withdraw from the group intervention.

The school shared information about the pupils they had selected with the EPS. The pupil information contained a pen portrait of each pupil, the key concerns school had and why EP involvement was required. This was also discussed in a meeting between the SENCo, EP and myself. The group dynamics were also considered during this meeting to ensure that there was an appropriate mix of pupils selected that would generate discussion and engage reciprocally within the weekly sessions.

Following the receipt of this background information, I devised six individual sessions in negotiation with the EP and school. A further meeting was arranged to share this information and the intended outcomes with the school's stakeholders (SENCo, Heads of Year, the Inclusion Manager and a Teaching Assistant the school had identified as the co-deliverer of the intervention). The purpose of this meeting was to ensure all stakeholders were briefed on what the intervention would entail and how best the pupils could be supported in school to generalise and consolidate the skills they would be learning in the weekly sessions.

During the same meeting the timing of the sessions were agreed and a room was allocated for the delivery of the intervention. School staff were given a timetable of sessions and a brief overview of why the group was meeting, what the focus of the group would be and what the likely learning points would be for all those participating.

(Pre) assessment

To inform the formulation process, pre-assessments were conducted, where I met with each child individually prior to the intervention commencing. SDQs (Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires, Goodman et al., 2000) were chosen by the EP and administered by me as the pre-assessment quantitative measure and they were used alongside qualitative anecdotal reports shared by school staff to provide assessment information, which included pen-

portraits of each pupil and the reason for their involvement in the group intervention.

Information gathered from the SDQ's is not included in the present study as no post-assessment measures were obtained and therefore no comparative information was available.

The purpose of meeting the pupils individually and gathering this information was 1) to gauge their readiness to become involved in the intervention, 2) to verify parental and school reports and 3) to gain the 'child's perspective,' and 4) to provide a baseline measure for each child prior to them becoming involved in the intervention, which was intended to be compared to a post-assessment measure to develop an outcome measure for the study.
The pre-assessment (and post-assessment) measures are presented in the findings section.

Problem formulation

Once discussions and background information on each pupil had been shared, problem formulations for each child were developed through discussions with school staff and pupils. According to Stallard (2002a) the formulation is a shared understanding of why the problems developed (onset) and why they keep happening (maintenance) (p.27). Due to time constraints the formulation process in this study focused on the maintenance of the problem

and shared hypotheses were formulated between staff, the EP and myself, which informed the content of the group intervention.

Through the problem formulation process it was hypothesised that the six chosen pupils were experiencing difficulties with self-regulation, displaying self-negating behaviours and required support to learn skills in cognitive reframing to see situations in a more positive light.

A typical formulation used for this study during the (pre) assessment process was as follows:

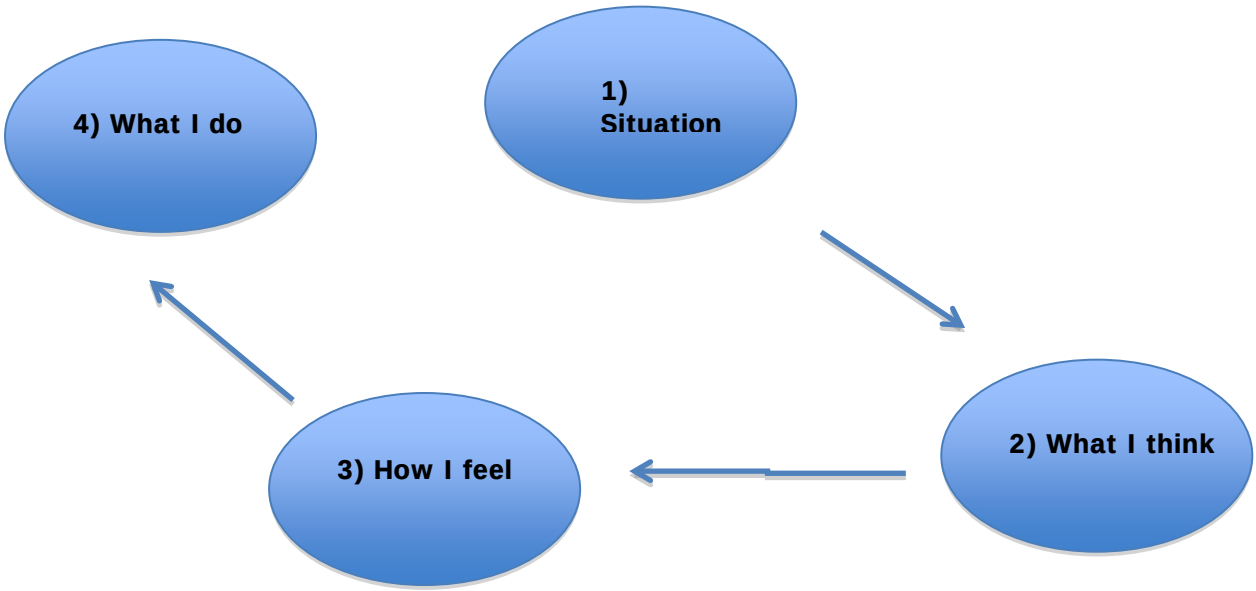


Figure 3: A simple mini-formulation used for the present study

The (therapeutic) intervention

The group intervention ran for six continuous weeks. The sessions were delivered by myself and a teaching assistant from the school. The content of the group was collaborative in focus emphasising the inter-relationships between pupils' thoughts, feelings and behaviour and working in partnership

to help the pupils test out various hypotheses to develop more optimistic thinking styles. The purpose of the sessions was therefore to provide the pupils with the tools to facilitate positive change.

All sessions followed the same format and lasted for an hour each (see appendix 1 and 2 for selection of session plans and figure 4 for session structure). During the first session the pupils agreed rules for the group to instil a sense of ownership of the intervention (see appendix 3) so they were more likely to respect and follow them. In the sessions there was a specific focus on eliciting pupils' negative automatic thoughts (NATs), or superficial and involuntary thoughts that become part of a person's habitual thinking (Stallard, 2002). This was attempted through a variety of activities, such as user-friendly worksheets to identify cognitive distortions (see appendices, 4, 5 and 6); affective management through relaxation and guided imagery exercises (appendices 7 and 8) and completion of behaviour and thought experiments using diary sheets for homework (appendices 9 and 10). All resources were used to aid cognitive re-structuring and more balanced cognitive skills. Each session was evaluated by recording anecdotal commentaries on each pupil (see appendix 11) and shared with stakeholders each week.

In an attempt to develop a therapeutic alliance, sessions were run with Rogerian psychology in mind, with an emphasis of unconditional positive

regard, genuineness and congruence. There was also an avid attempt to make the sessions interactive, fun and engaging to the young people.

- Introductions/hellos and news
- Warm-up activity
- Reviewing previous sessions homework
- Agenda setting and introducing session themes
- Running the session theme
- Plenary
- Setting homework
- Summary and goodbyes

Figure 4: Structure of each session

Evaluation (and post-assessment)

Following the completion of the six-week group intervention, anecdotal accounts were gathered from the pupils' class teachers that indicated what short-term impact and initial changes had been noticed in the young people's behaviour. Furthermore, information extrapolated from the session's weekly evaluations and pupil comments were also used as part of the evaluation of the intervention. These accounts are presented in the findings section. Due to time/communication constraints no quantitative measures using the SDQs were used as post-assessment measures. The reasons for not gathering this post-assessment information included: school staff not available to liaise or not responding to EP correspondence, pupil absence and time constraints on EP practice.

Presentation of findings

In this section the findings are presented for individual pupils as a pre/post comparison of qualitative commentaries, anecdotal evidence and feedback from school staff and participant views. The pre-assessment findings give an indication of why the pupils were raised for EP involvement and the post-assessment findings provide evidence of reported changes following the completion of the intervention. This section also reports the barriers and facilitators to my involvement in undertaking this therapeutic work.

Figure 5: Pupils' views pre-assessments:

Pupil	Qualitative commentary
Pupil 1:	Has negative peer relationships and blames difficulties on self, they would like to able to get on with others better and more often. They also feel that they have a temper, which is difficult for them to control.
Pupil 2:	Feels that other children do not like them and other people try to get them into trouble on purpose. They would like to be able to manage their own behaviour so other people start taking them more seriously.
Pupil 3:	Feels lonely at school, although has friends would like more. Is looking forward to meeting others in the group and wants to help others and be helped to think more positively
Pupil 4:	Thinks that they are 'rubbish' at learning and making friends
Pupil 5:	Likes school and is happy. Would like some ideas to get on better with people at home
Pupil 6:	Likes learning but feels that they are an 'outcast' at school and people pick on them for being different.

Figure 6: School's views pre-assessment:

Pupil	Qualitative commentary
Pupil 1:	They have negative peer relationships and are starting to get into trouble on a regular basis. They make the wrong choices and do not see the consequences of their actions. Lack self-control and self-awareness. Parents also have concerns about similar behaviours.
Pupil 2:	They have low self-esteem/confidence, and have problems with managing their feelings. They are not popular and gets into arguments with others because they think the worst from a situation.
Pupil 3:	Is socially and emotionally immature and lacks social awareness. Very negative self-perceptions, needs support to see positives in a situation
Pupil 4:	Is very sulky and pessimistic about life. Finds it difficult getting motivated or interested in school life and is pessimistic about his school experience
Pupil 5:	Doing well academically, however, has difficulties with self-control and self-awareness and cannot see connections between his actions and their consequences
Pupil 6:	Is finding getting on with others difficult and has yet to establish any friendships. Is gloomy about future prospects at school.

Pupils' post intervention views:

Following a similar procedure to collecting the pupils' and adults' pre intervention views, the post-intervention views were collected by myself through verbal feedback with both cohorts, the findings of which are presented below:

Figure 7:Pupils' post-assessment views:

Pupil	Qualitative commentary
Pupil 1:	They reported that accessing the group had made them feel that they had more skills to control their temper and understand other people's views

Pupil 2:	They acknowledged that it might not be that people do not like them, and found thinking positively about situations there is another way to see things
Pupil 3:	"I'm happy I joined the group and feel that I've learnt new skills to help me think better thoughts"
Pupil 4:	"I felt that the group sessions were a waste of time and did not learn anything new"
Pupil 5:	They learned useful techniques of how to turn bad thoughts into good thoughts
Pupil 6:	"Attending the group has given me the skills how to cope when I maybe feeling down"

Pupil	**Qualitative commentary**
Pupil 1:	Parents' reported noticeable improvements in their behaviour, more tolerant of others' opinions and views. No reported differences in behaviours at school.
Pupil 2:	More talkative in tutor group and starting to socialise with other children more. Arguing and bickering is not as often before they accessed the group.
Pupil 3:	Still needs support and reassurance, however, is a little more positive about coming to school.
Pupil 4:	Regularly reports that they do not like school, the teachers or other pupils. They have reported that they want to attend a different school and hope to leave soon. I see no difference in their attitude.
Pupil 5:	Presents as less on edge and I've noticed that they talk about how they are feeling a lot more now.
Pupil 6:	I think he did not have the confidence to make the most of the group sessions. I think he thought he was going to the group to make friends not learn skills to help him think 'differently', shame really as he could have done with the extra support.

Figure 8: School's post-intervention views:

*My personal reflections of running the group intervention- **Barriers** and **limitations** to the present study:*

- During the intervention there was limited reciprocal liaison between the EPS and the school. The school stakeholders rarely engaged in a dialogue about the group intervention making it difficult to check whether key concepts were reinforced and revisited by the co-deliverer. On reflection this was possibly due to time constraints staff (and the EPS) were working under, which impacted on the communication/liaison between the two parties.
- Having limited time to read the psychological theory to refine my skills and support my therapeutic practice
- Furthermore, a combination of time constraints and poor organisation on behalf of the school, where sessions did not run on time meant that no quantitative post assessments were completed by the school and vital evaluation and information on outcome measures was not collected, making it difficult to infer 'how much' difference or 'what' difference attending the group had made. Although it is pertinent to mention that any change recorded could not be attributed just to the intervention, as there were no applied controls within the existing study.
- The allocation of the 'additional adult' who did not have a psychology background raised questions regarding whether they were the 'appropriate' professional to aid the process within the school. The purpose of their involvement was essentially to learn the key principles of the CBT intervention by becoming a co-facilitator and receiving pre-teaching and post-teaching from myself, so the newly acquired knowledge could be further cascaded within the school. However, it is unlikely that

over six one-hour sessions this information could be realistically be embedded or shared to a level that would allow a non-psychologist to 'learn' the prerequisite skills needed to continue the intervention in their school. On reflection, It would have been more beneficial to capacity build through delivering training to staff on CBT and arranging supervision sessions to discuss the applied knowledge and skills, however, due to the time constraints I was working within this 'ideal' alternative was not a possibility. This does however, raise interesting questions whether the person delivering non-pure forms of CBT or other therapeutic interventions should be a psychologist who has an understanding of the psychological underpinning and implications on its client base.

- A member of staff was not made available for every session making it difficult to 'share' or 'give away' key psychological knowledge underpinning the intervention and also problematic to envisage how capacity building could be achieved in this instance
- Having a limited capacity and time to form a therapeutic alliance with the pupils despite the application of Rogerian psychology
- The EPS delivery model was a time allocation model which was restrictive and inflexible in allowing further time to used to support the running/evaluation of the group
- Although I was offered supervision as part of my university based tutorial support, no therapeutic/specialist supervision above that of my 'usual' supervision was allocated to me from the EPS to support the weekly sessional group work.

Facilitators:

- A key facilitator in conducting this therapeutic intervention was the opportunity to apply my psychological knowledge to devise and implement a group based resource, in addition to sharing this knowledge with school staff to aid further 'in-house' psychologically underpinned interventions. Although there was not consistent additional adult support allocated by the school during this intervention, and the support that was given restricted the potential scope of capacity building in this project, when an adult was involved in the intervention there was an opportunity to discuss, develop and consolidate psychological practice, which was well-received by those participating.
- I felt that the bespoke programme demonstrated a distinctive 'psychological' contribution to supporting young people in school.

Discussion

Although not the key focus of the present study, findings suggest that there were some reported positive changes in the pupils' cognitive skills from school staff and the pupils who participated. These changes included:

- Improved self-regulation skills
- More rational thinking skills
- More personalised focus on positive thoughts, resilience and personal resources

It is however, pertinent to point out that these changes cannot be purely attributed to the pupils accessing the CBT group intervention.

Further findings from delivering the group intervention also raised interesting questions regarding what barriers and facilitators exist when EPs engage in therapeutic work and whether this type of work should be within the existing remit of their practice. A noticeable barrier from running the group intervention was associated to time constraints in liaising with stakeholders and delivering the intervention; areas that are discussed in more detail below.

Potential barriers to EPs working therapeutically

In running the therapeutic group work difficulties arose in sustaining liaison between the EPS and the school stakeholders. On reflection this was partly due to the time constraints both parties were working under. At the time of delivery the school SENCo was either ill or attending training courses and the Inclusion Manager had other in-house responsibilities that restricted her involvement in the programme. Furthermore, I had a full caseload and very little spare time in my diary to commit to further involvement in the programme. I was also involved in delivering other training and received an influx of statutory assessments to complete over the same period at which this group intervention was being delivered.

The difficulties I experienced associated with the 'time constraints' in delivering the therapeutic intervention is congruent with a number of studies that have focused on EPs role within therapeutic work. For example, similar findings were reported by Anderson (2012) who found time constraints were a 'challenge' and 'restriction' for EPs working therapeutically. Further findings from Rait et al., (2010); Mackay (2007) and Squires and Dunsmuir (2011)

also echo this sentiment but for different reasons. In particular, MacKay (2007) highlights the EPs statutory role as a priority of the allocation of resources at the expense of other effective psychological interventions, which has led to depleted opportunities for EPs to practice therapeutic interventions. Likewise, Rait et al., (2010, p.113) suggest EPs have very limited time to be involved in direct CBT work with children and young people, something that was felt by myself in the present study. Squires and Dunsmuir (2011) found that TEPs reported time pressures as a significant barrier to delivering therapeutic work, as was time for reading the psychological theory to support this practice; something that I also experienced as an ongoing challenge in conducting this work.

Furthermore, it can also be argued that the competing demands of the EP role in delivering services to clients that involve consultation, research-based work, assessments (including statutory and beyond), devising and implementing interventions and training limits the scope for EPs to commit further time to lengthy therapeutic interventions.

Reflecting on the delivery of the group intervention in the present study, the other competing demands listed above contributed to why additional difficulties arose in this study, such as limiting time for liaison to ensure key therapeutic and theoretical concepts were being embedded and consolidated, and difficulties in accessing the school and gathering quantitative post assessment information and outcome measures.

The EPS 'time allocation' model of service delivery was also a further restriction on the (in)flexibility in delivery arrangements and running a 6-week course restricted the opportunity to deal with any complex issues raised in the group and develop a therapeutic alliance with the young people. According to Stallard (2002a) forming and sustaining a therapeutic alliance is a pre-requisite for practice to be viewed as 'therapeutic.' Likewise Roth and Pilling (2007, p.11) suggest building a therapeutic alliance is key to achieving better outcomes. These points not only raise questions regarding EPs scope and capacity to be involved in lengthy therapeutic work but also ethical questions about whether they have time to establish a therapeutic relationship and deliver 'pure' therapeutic work that delivers therapeutic benefits to the client.

A further barrier within the present study stems from receiving no specialist supervision to support the theoretical or practical application of the therapeutic work I conducted. In their research, Squires and Dunsmuir (2011) found that TEPs valued receiving supervision from experienced EPs with knowledge, training and supervised practice to deliver CBT, and if I had received such supervision it would have given me reassurance that my practice was conducted safely and ethically.

Although I was offered supervision at university, it would have been beneficial to access it weekly within the EPS immediately before or after a CBT session delivery when information was fresh in my mind. However, no suitable support was available in the EPS I was practising within. There was also no

scope for me engage in peer supervision as described by Atkinson et al., (2013) due to the time constraints placed on other EPs and my senior manager did not possess the prerequisite knowledge, skills or understanding to support or develop my therapeutic working practice, therefore there was little supported opportunities for case reflection or discussion.

This raised ethical issues as to whether I was meeting the basic minimum standards as described by Roth and Pilling (2007), as supervision would have provided a means of monitoring my own expertise and fidelity to the theory underpinning the therapeutic work, especially from someone who had more knowledge and experience than myself. Furthermore, there is research and guidance that recommends if therapeutic work is conducted then specialist supervision beyond the usual 'generic' supervision should be delivered and accessed (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010 and Atkinson, et al., 2013). Other scholars have argued that not accessing this 'specialist' supervision is essentially a barrier to 'therapeutic' practice (Pretorius, 2006 and Holland, 2006, in Squires, 2010), which in my experience is a position I concur with.

My experience in the present study raises interesting 'what if' questions regarding EPs therapeutic practice. For example what if EPs are not accessing 'specialist' supervision on a regular and ongoing basis? How can one be certain that those delivering therapeutic interventions are practising appropriately and ethically, have the necessary expertise, competence and knowledge to ensure fidelity of the model underpinning the intervention and

more to the point that the intervention being delivered is in fact 'therapeutic' in origin.

In reviewing the very lengthy and detailed structure of supervision stipulated by Liese and Alford (1998) and considering the recommended allocated weekly supervision time for EPs and TEPs it is highly unlikely that suitable supervision could cover therapeutic practice in much detail unless a specific role was allocated to provide such 'specialist' support and supervision within an EPS. This point is discussed in greater detail later on.

It would therefore appear that delivering therapeutic work is a lengthy process, that requires ongoing commitment, time and resources which raises questions regarding whether it could/should be conceivably part of the existing range of EP practice.

Potential facilitators to EPs working therapeutically

In reviewing the findings of this study there is also a prominent facilitator to EP's working therapeutically. This facilitator involved the opportunity for me to apply psychological knowledge to help others to develop their thinking skills, and develop/enhance their self-awareness, meta-cognition skills and a gain a deeper understanding of psycho-education. My findings support those advocated by Mackay (2007) and Squires (2010) that EPs are well positioned to deliver therapeutic work and this paper is not disputing this position. It is therefore understandable that there has been a renaissance of interest from EPs to apply their psychological skills into therapeutic working practices. What

this paper does dispute however, is whether EPs have the capacity to work therapeutically as part of their ongoing working practices, considering the time constraints, need to access ongoing/thorough specialist supervision alongside and within an already eclectic role.

Reflecting on my experience of devising and delivering the therapeutic group it went some way to demonstrate a 'distinctive contribution' (Farrell, et al., 2006; Cameron, 2006 and Ashton and Roberts, 2006), that possibly no other health professional service would have provided within the school culture for that duration. This supports the view advocated by Squires (2010) who suggested EPs are well positioned to deliver therapeutic interventions in schools because of their knowledge of working in educational contexts, and possessing a 'unique' understanding of the needs of children and young people and how they can be supported through the application of psychology.

Next steps and implications for EPs working therapeutically

In presenting the findings from a six week therapeutic group intervention and discussing the potential barriers and facilitators to EPs working therapeutically some important implications for EPs therapeutic practice and also questions regarding how and under what conditions EPs could work therapeutically are roused.

In this study it has already been noted that the 'time allocation' model I was working within was a contributing barrier to devising and delivering this group intervention, particularly so because it was beyond 'usual' practice in the EPS.

Fallon et al., (2010) and the AEP (2011) suggest that a semi-traded or traded service model of delivery would be more conducive in aiding EPSs to engage and deliver services beyond their 'usual' practice, and this could include therapeutic interventions to schools. In fact Atkinson et al., (2011) suggest that working within a traded/semi-traded EPS is a facilitating factor for EPs engaging in therapeutic work when compared to the traditional Local Authority core funded EPS, possibly because there is greater flexibility and scope to free up capacity to meet the client's needs to conduct therapeutic work and less emphasis on Statutory duties being the 'sole' remit of the EP role. Moreover, considering the rise in EPSs that are offering commissioned services to their clients there is scope for EPs to provide therapeutic services to schools should the need arise and if time is allocated specifically to support this therapeutic role.

Atkinson et al., (2013) suggest that for therapeutic work to be successfully implemented it needs to be part of a strong strategic commitment from the EPS in delivering therapeutic work to its clients. This strategic commitment would also include ongoing access to specialist supervision. Furthermore, Squires and Dunsmuir (2011) suggest that EPSs need to consider whether working therapeutically is within the scope of existing demands of service delivery and if therapeutic work is offered what do the clients want and how will they use their time, for example using six sessions of CBT on one child or six individual sessions on six pupils.

Furthermore, EPs are in a unique position to offer a distinctive therapeutic contribution to schools as organisations by sharing their psychological knowledge and expertise to others, including co-facilitators to therapeutic interventions, although this study is not a good exemplar. It is however, unlikely that school staff without a psychological background would be fully able to capacity build and sustain the skills within a school without a Psychologist's support or ongoing involvement to ensure fidelity to the chosen 'therapeutic' model and also to ensure an accurate interpretation of psychological constructs and the implications they may have for the young person are fully understood.

Although Rait et al., (2010) and Atkinson et al., (2011) have suggested EPs do not have the capacity to engage in direct therapeutic work with children and young people, EPs are in a unique position to support others in school based projects through consultation, applied research and training. By providing training to schools and sharing therapeutic skills to school staff it not only compliments EPs eco-systemic working practices and the interactionist perspective that the profession advocates but also offers an opportunity to skill up, capacity build and empower others who work directly with children and young people on a day-to-day basis through the application of psychological theory. By skilling up staff they would be in a position to take on the role in developing a therapeutic alliance. For example, sharing the discourse of psychological approaches such as solution-focused working or Rogerian psychology would empower and enable school staff to develop a

therapeutic alliance with the added benefit of being a familiar and constant face within the young person's day-to-day life.

Notwithstanding, even if EPs could provide ongoing therapeutic work to schools there are still questions regarding how they implement these services and make the services competitive. Rait et al., (2010) suggest that EPs are an expensive resource and price themselves out of the 'therapeutic market' as there are other health professional services that can offer similar services for a fraction of the cost. Atkinson et al., (2013) suggest that if EPs are serious about providing therapeutic services as their 'core' working practices then the services they offer need to be advertised and marketed appropriately to ensure clients are aware that therapeutic work is within the existing remit of EP practice offered to schools.

There are some interesting questions that develop from the vision of EPs working therapeutically. For example, If EPs were to have an enhanced and ongoing role in delivering therapeutic work to schools the profession needs to consider what would it look like? Would the work be core or commissioned work? Would it be based on 'pure' therapeutic practice or a variant of therapeutic practice? If it is not 'pure' then is it providing therapy or fidelity to the theoretical model? Would it be bespoke or off the shelf? If it is the latter, then where is the 'distinctive contribution' of the EP in delivering therapeutic services to schools, and would this variant potentially deskill the EP? These questions are however beyond the scope of the current paper but worthy

starting points for EPSs to consider when providing therapeutic services to their clients.

Conclusion

In attempting to answer the question whether therapeutic work should be within the existing remit of EP practice, this study has found support for previous research that there are barriers and facilitators to EPs engaging in this type of work. The findings suggest the main barriers are capacity to deliver therapeutic work alongside other 'routine' EP commitments and difficulties accessing appropriate supervisory support. Conversely the facilitators are the psychological backgrounds and the distinctive contribution this brings to EPs working therapeutically.

The present study raises interesting questions regarding the future of EP therapeutic practice and highlights that EPSs need to be clear about what services they are offering, who they are offering the services to and whether they have the capacity to deliver the services. It has been argued in this study that the EPs' capacity to deliver is dependent upon a number of factors including the value that is placed on therapeutic practice and the type of service model delivery an EP is practising within.

Further recommendations developing from this study suggest it would be prudent for EPSs to develop specialist therapeutic EP positions to ensure appropriate training and specialist supervision is established and implemented. This may be one way to overcome the time constraints in

delivering therapeutic work within a service and also provide invaluable marketing of the EPs role in delivering therapeutic interventions in schools.

In discussing the EP's role within therapeutic work, further research is also required from other professionals', and service users' perspectives as the current research base in this area only reflects an EP opinion and is therefore open to question. Only when this broader perspective is gathered can we start to consider whether therapeutic work in schools should/should not be within the existing remit of EP practice.

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Appendix 1

Session 1: Session plan

Introductions/hellos and news

1) Introductions, purpose of the group, when, where and how many times
2) Devising ground rules: confidentiality, importance of feeling safe in the group

Warm-up Activity

3) One activity from: favourite food, TV programme, 3 things you like about school, strengths and talents, one thing I'd like to change about myself

Agenda Setting

4) Introduce session focus: Theme 1: Our thoughts, feelings and behaviour are connected

Running the session theme

a. This session focuses on thoughts (positive and negative thoughts) ask group for examples of each – introduce sheet
b. Scaffold ideas:
c. Record ideas on sheets provided – unhelpful and helpful thoughts
d. Role play (if time)
e. Relaxing helps to gain control over our thoughts, feelings and behaviour and help us manage situations more effectively – relaxation script and techniques/introduce model for breathing to relax

Plenary

5) Sharing ideas – problem solving as a group

Setting Homework

6) Homework (behaviour experiment), goal setting, diary sheet – to list (positive and negative) thoughts throughout the week
7) Introduce diary sheets – explain what to do
8) Any questions?

Summary and Goodbyes

9) Goodbyes: recap on time to meet next time, location and completion of the diary sheet

Resources required:

- Flip chart paper and pens
- Diary sheets
- Pencils
- Positive and negative sheets

Extension/ contingency plan

- Relaxation script
- Breathing triangle

Appendix 2

Session 3: Session Plan

Introductions/hellos and news

1) Meeting up and discussing the last week

Warm-up activity

2) 3 positive thoughts

Reviewing previous session/homework

3) Discussing the previous session focus and pupil accounts of homework

Agenda Setting and introducing the session themes

4) Introducing session focus: Theme 3: looking for positive and negative examples of thoughts that occur in school: Look at alternative thinking, challenging Negative Automatic Thoughts, self-talk, coping mechanisms

Running the session theme

a. Discuss NATs are explained by the metaphor of tape playing in head which boss how we do things (thoughts about me, what I do and my future) – turning down the volume or stopping the tape where we over look the exceptions and positives

b. Ask for examples of positive and negative thoughts occurring related to school: share them and introduce alternative ways in which to think

c. Introduce methods of checking, challenging and testing negative thoughts (identifying alternative and balanced thinking):

d. Looking for evidence to disprove negative thinking – testing out the negative thoughts and challenging them (always, never) – thought challenger

e. Positive self-talk (re: Watch Evan almighty DVD)

f. Complete sheet challenging and turning a negative (unhelpful thought) into a positive (helpful thought) See appendix 6

Plenary

5) Sharing ideas – problem solving as a group

Setting homework

6) Homework (behaviour experiment), goal setting, diary sheet – to list (positive and negative) thoughts throughout the week

7) Diary sheets – explain what to do again

8) Any questions?

Summary and goodbyes

9) Goodbyes: recap on time to meet next time, location and completion of the diary sheet

Appendix 3: Group rules

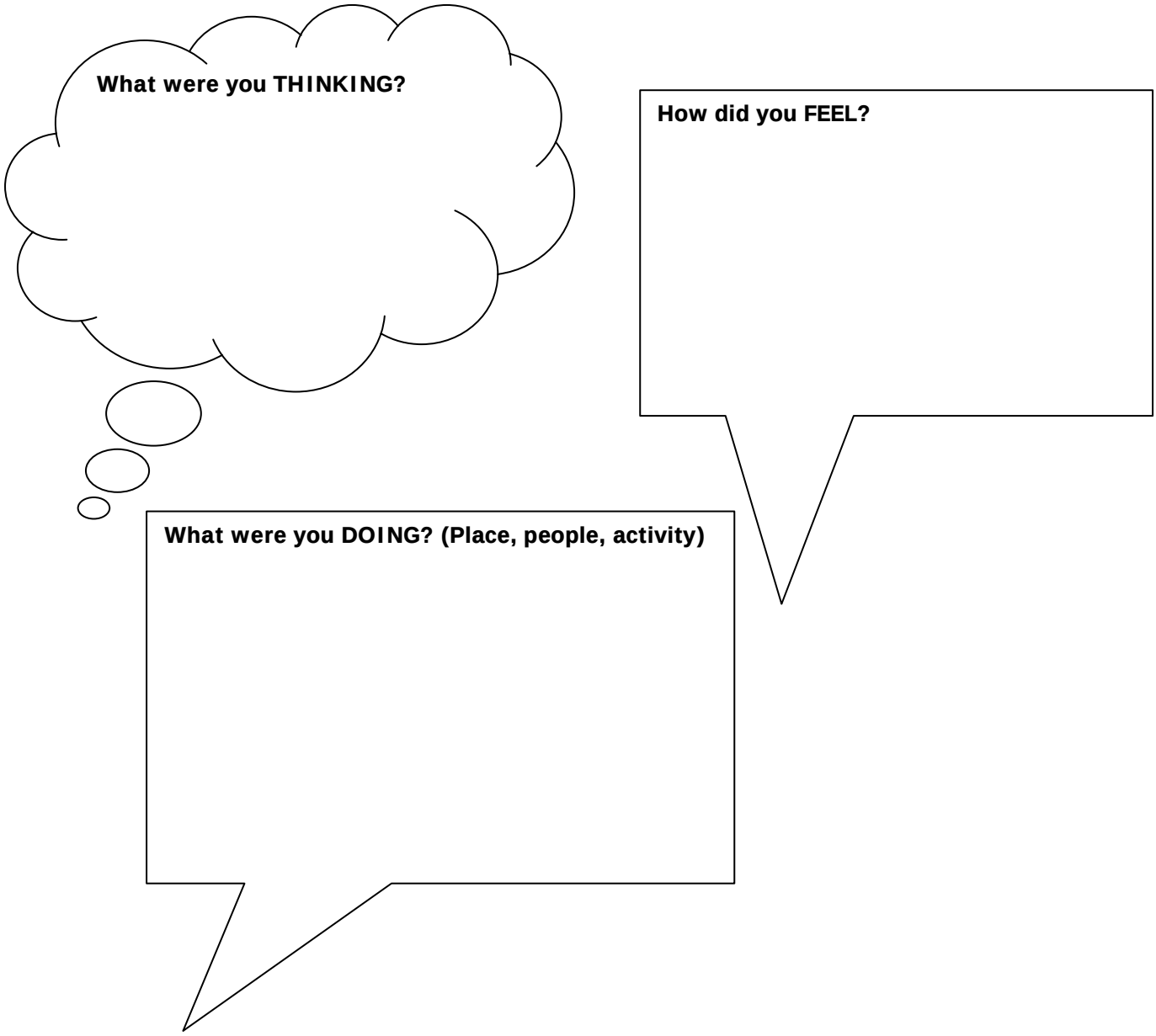
- To respect each other
- To include everyone
- To treat others how you would like to be treated
- To keep what is said in the room confidential

Appendix 4:

Positive (helpful) Thinking

Think about something you have done recently which you really enjoyed or are proud of. Write or draw in the shapes below:

- What you THINK about when you are in that situation
- How you FELT
- What HAPPENS

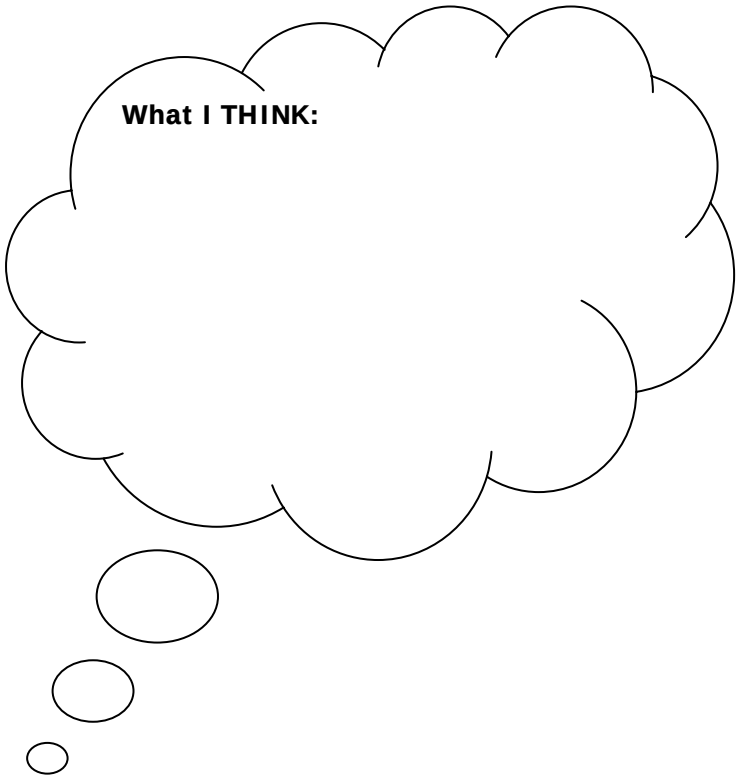


Appendix 5:

Negative (unhelpful) Thinking

Think about one of your most difficult situations and write or draw:

- What you THINK about when you are in that situation
- How you FEEL
- What HAPPENS

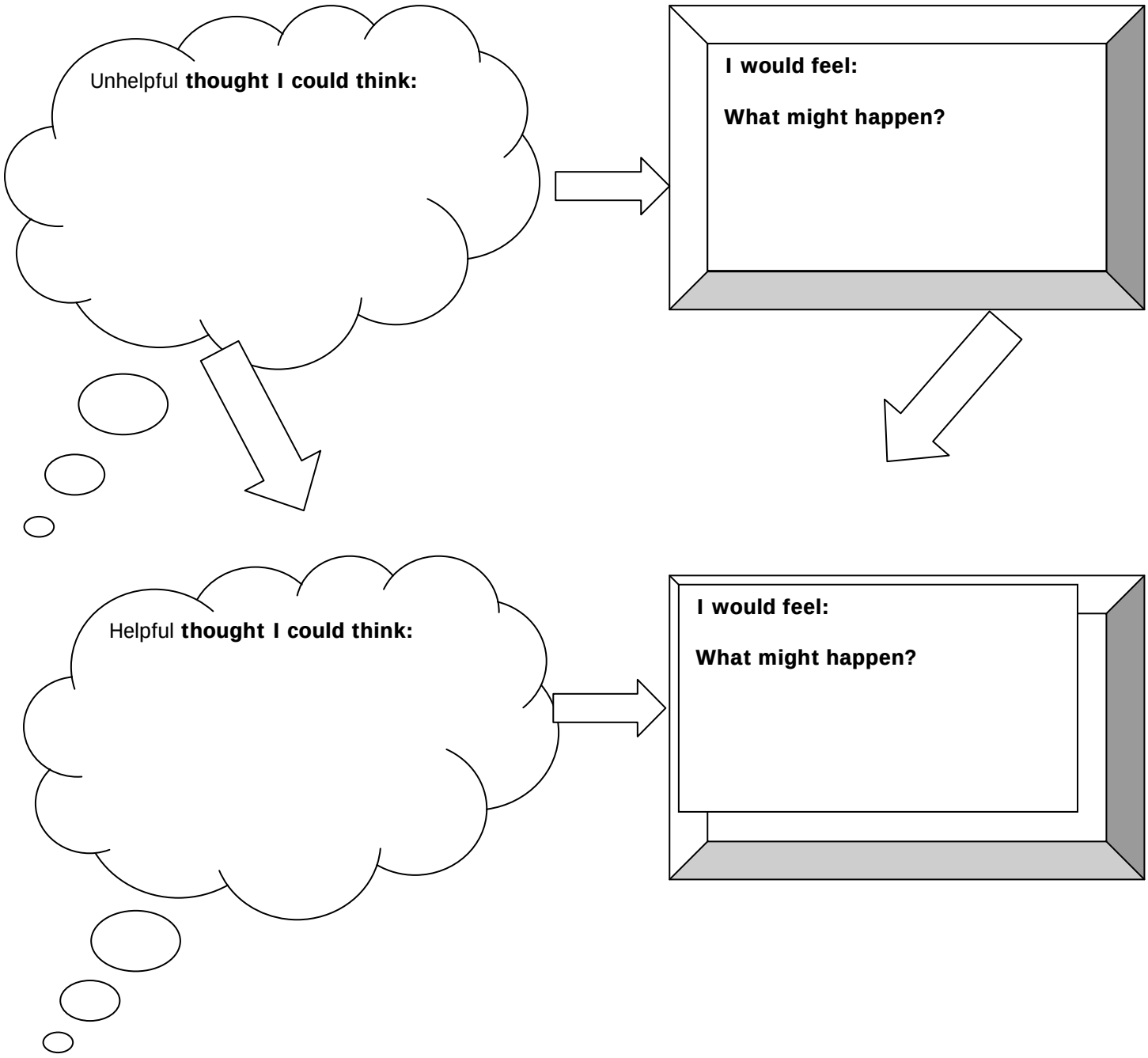


How I FEEL:

What I DO:

Appendix 6: Turning negative thoughts into positive thinking

Think about a negative thought you might have. This could be about yourself, what you do or about your future. Write down the unhelpful thought and how it makes you feel and behave. Turn this unhelpful thought into a helpful thought and record how this would make you feel and behave.



Appendix 7: Relaxation script and guided imagery

Relaxation

Make sure you are in a comfortable position…let your whole body go loose…let your body sink into the chair so that you are as still as can be…begin to think about your toes. Relax your toes and feel them getting warm and heavy…let the tightness just float away from your toe muscles…now let go of any tightness in your legs. Put all your attention into your legs and let the muscles relax, release, let go…when your legs are relaxed begin to think about your tummy. Feel the muscles in your tummy go soft, relaxing and releasing any tightness that may be there…feel your hands and arms getting warm and heavy as they rest comfortably by your sides…your fingers are very slightly curled but there is no tightness in them…Now think about your shoulders. Gently raise your shoulders up towards your ears now and feel how hard the muscles have to work to keep them there…then let go…and feel the difference…notice how it felt when they were tight and how it feels when your shoulders are more relaxed…now let go even more than you thought you could…think about your face. Feel a smile start to come…let the smile spread and spread until it reaches your eyes! …Now let it go so that all the muscles on your face gently relax and your forehead feels a little wider and higher than it did before…if you haven't already shut your eyes, let your eyes gently close now…feel them become heavier and heavier so you couldn't open them even if you tried…notice your breathing. Be very still as you feel the air going into your body when you breathe gently and quietly…feel it as it slowly goes out again…in and out like waves on a seashore…in…and…out…in…and…out…now just feel yourself relaxing more and more…imagine that there is a warm light coming up from the ground…it is flowing through your feet…through your legs…your body…your arms…your shoulders…and your head…it floats away through the top of your head and drifts upwards…now your body is still relaxed but your mind is awake and ready…

Guided Imagery

…Now imagine you are on a desert island, sitting on the soft sand in the warm sun. Look around & notice all the different colours & shapes that you can see… What can you see on the island?…., on the sand?….. in the sea?…. Now feel the warmth of the sun on your skin as you sit on the beach…feel the breeze of the summer air on your body.

You are lovely & warm, calm & relaxed … you start to yawn & lie down on the sand…you slowly close your eyes……..as you close your eyes to go to sleep, you listen to the sounds around you. What sounds can you hear? Which ones are can you hear the clearest? Now you start to sniff… what can you smell?…. Is it a smell you know?……what does it remind you of…?

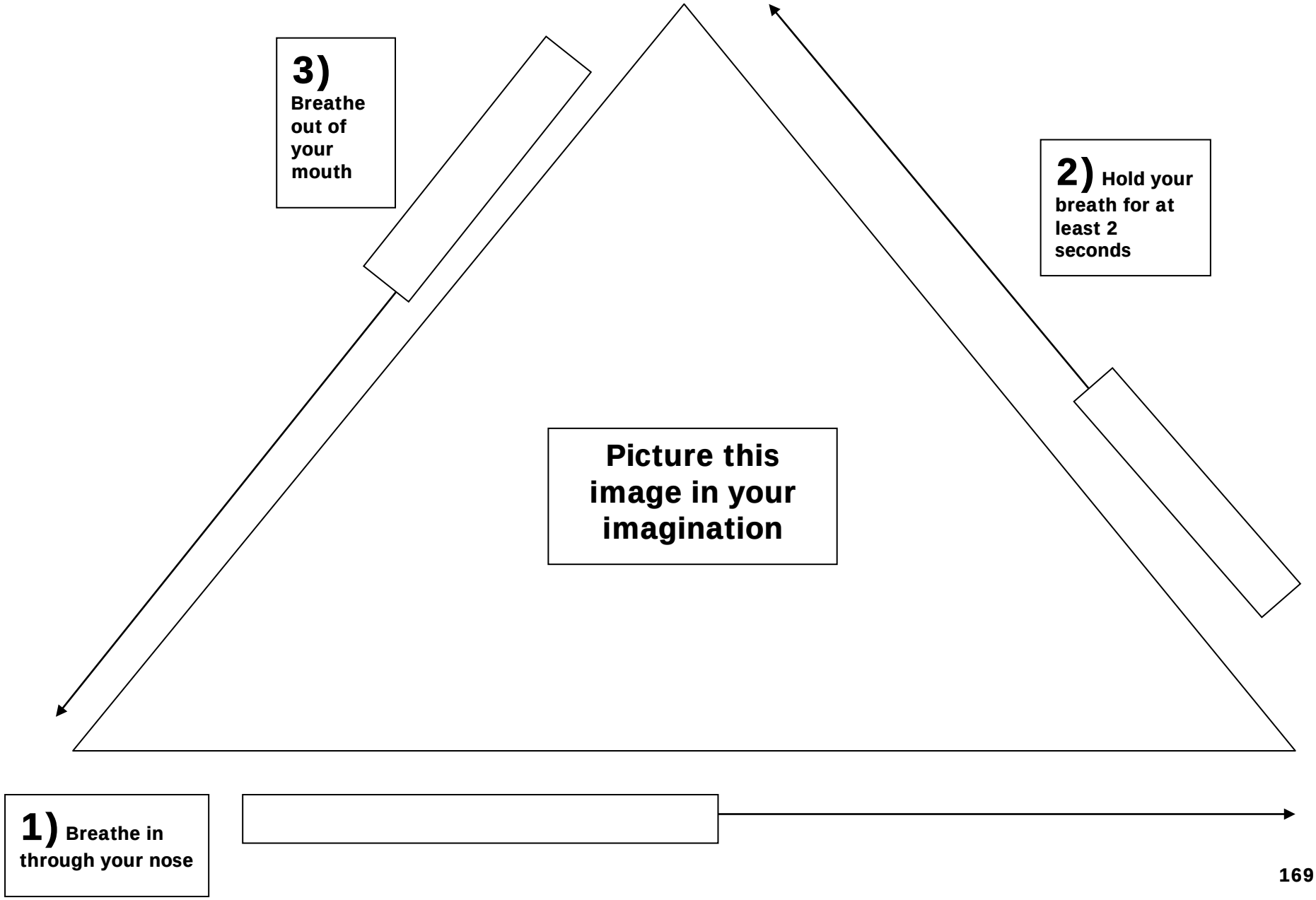
Now you are looking at yourself asleep on the beach in the sun…notice the different shapes & colours on the island…..Look around the island….. Notice what is on the sand…look all around you…what do you see?….what do you hear?….what do you feel?….what do you taste?….what do you smell?….

OK now start to feel yourself lying on the soft sand again… feel the soft sand between your fingers & toes…look at the bright cloudless, blue sky….the image is starting to fade….it's getting lighter & brighter…it's time to thank your imagination for taking you on that journey… OK, now it's time to slowly & peacefully return to the classroom. Take three deep breaths in through your nose & out through your mouth … feeling your breathe travelling in & out of your lungs. (count these).

Now start to think about your fingers & toes… give them a little wriggle…keep your eyes closed and feel how your body is gradually back in the room where we started. Notice the feel of your clothes against your skin and your body touching the chair… keep your eyes closed for a little while longer. Begin to listen to the sounds in the room and outside…now wriggle your fingers & toes again and when you're ready, have a big stretch and open your eyes slowly…and here you are back in the room! Just sit quietly for a while and then when everyone is ready we can talk about what happened.

Add appendices 8 to 11 here

Appendix 8: A model for breathing to relax



Appendix 9: My Thoughts Diary

Name:	**Day and Time:**
Situation: *(what, where, when and who)*	
Describe What Happened? How did you feel? *(1 – 10, where 10 is the worst)*	
Your Unhelpful Thoughts	
What is a more balanced and helpful thought? How did you feel? *(1 – 10, where 10 is the worst)*	

Appendix 9: My Thoughts Diary

Name:	**Day and Time:**
Situation: *(what, where, when and who)*	
Describe What Happened? How did you feel? *(1 – 10, where 10 is the worst)*	
Your Unhelpful Thoughts	
What is a more balanced and helpful thought? How did you feel? *(1 – 10, where 10 is the worst)*	

Appendix 11: Facilitators Weekly Evaluation

Pupils Name	Date/session number	Comments

Doctorate In Applied Educational and Child Psychology (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D).

Postgraduate Training in Educational Psychology

Nurturing Values: A nurture group's impact on whole-school nurturing practices

Will Cross 1060365

13.5.13

Chapter 5: Nurturing Values:
A nurture group's impact on whole-school nurturing practices

Abstract

This report presents and examines staff perceptions regarding a nurture group's (NG) impact on their school's nurturing practice. Information was extrapolated from questionnaires that were circulated to 24 teaching staff from one school to ascertain how effective an on site NG was in influencing nurturing practices within their school community. Key findings suggest that the 'nurturing' practice within this school was not adopted by all staff, although most staff reported that the NG had a positive impact on other children attending the school, where improvements in school behaviour management were reported. Further findings suggest the majority of staff are aware of the functions/purpose of a NG and two thirds report there is effective liaison between the NG and mainstream classrooms, which led to improved understanding of nurturing practice. Evidence is also reported that suggests the nurturing practice was not 'whole school' as there were some staff and children that had no involvement with the NG or secure knowledge of its practical application. Further ideas for future whole school research are presented and implications and recommendations for developing whole school nurturing practice and systemic Educational Psychologist involvement in schools are discussed.

Introduction

This report explores the perceptions and beliefs of staff from one school in relation to an on-site Nurture Group's (NG) impact on whole-school nurturing

practice. The study was undertaken during my second year of professional practice as an Educational Psychologist in Training (EPiT). The study became the product of negotiations between myself, on behalf of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) I was working for, and the participating school's Head Teacher. This report summarises a proportion of my findings from a larger study into the NG's impact on individual pupils and systemic practices, with the latter being the focus of the present study (see appendix 3 for findings of work with the individual children attending the NG).

The focus of the present study was chosen as the systemic influences of NGs appear a largely under researched and published area. Instead Nurture Group research typically focuses on how the provision has impacted on individual pupils (Cooper et al., 2001; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Reynolds et al., 2009; and Seth-Smith et al., 2010), over the domains of social skills (Doyle, 2001 and Sanders, 2007), emotional impact (Boorn et al, 2010), behaviour (Binnie and Allen, 2009) and learning (Scott and Lee, 2009 and MacKay et al., 2010). However, it is not surprising that the majority of research focuses in these areas, considering these are the areas NGs were originally envisaged to ameliorate (Bennathan and Boxall, 1996).

In considering the evidence-base for and value of a NG's impact in improving individual outcomes and life chances, I was intrigued to discover what the wider school perceptions and perspectives regarding a NG provision were and whether school staff who shared the same school where the NG was located

were aware or believed that the NG's presence and provision it offered had any wider impact or influence on whole-school practice.

There has been some published research that has reported the impact a NG has on the whole school. However, there is very limited research that has looked 'specifically' at NG practice and its wider implications on whole-school practice. In 1999, Lucas suggested that a NG could impact on and influence a whole-school ethos when the theory underpinning NGs is applied within the curriculum. However, Lucas' (1999) suggestions were based on her own perspective, experiences and anecdotal evidence from running NGs, and did not gauge the perspectives of others within the school environment or those directly or actively involved with the NG. Lucas is also an advocate for nurture groups and her work could therefore present a biased view of NGs' worth in benefitting the wider school community. Furthermore, in 2008, Binnie and Allen found tentative evidence from Head teachers and teachers to suggest a NG contributes to whole-school systems through improving the school ethos and capacity to support children with SEBD (p.201), although Binnie and Allen's (2008) research did not 'specifically' focus on the systemic implications of NGs per se, therefore, there appears to be a gap in contemporary research regarding the NGs impact at whole-school level and this gap forms the focus for the present study.

The report will begin with a definition of what a NG is and a brief background to the origins of NGs and reasons why they were formed and remain such a

valuable resource provision. The discussion continues with an introduction to the underlying psychological theory associated to NGs and its relation to nurturing practice. Following this there is an introduction to and review of the literature associated to NGs, with a particular focus on research pertaining to its impact at individual level and how this dominates the literature base. Gaps in the research corpus are presented and literature relating to NGs' impact at systemic level is introduced. The present study's aims and research questions will be presented and original fieldwork introduced, including the background to study and procedure followed. Next, the findings will be presented by question through qualitative and quantitative analysis and key findings discussed and related to research presented in the literature review, with a particular focus on the NGs' influence on whole-school nurturing practice. Limitations of the present study and recommendations for future research are discussed. The report concludes by discussing the implications for Educational Psychology whole-school nurturing practice.

Literature Review

Nurture Groups (NGs) have long been evidenced to provide positive outcomes and support for children who are not developmentally ready to access a formal learning environment and those that are thought to have missed out on vital early social and emotional experiences. However, very little research has been dedicated to exploring what influence NG's have on whole-school practice. This study seeks to counter that trend by exploring school staffs' perceptions regarding one NG and its influence on whole-school nurturing practice. So what is a Nurture Group?

What are Nurture Groups?

Nurture Groups (NGs) have been defined as an alternative form of provision located within mainstream schools that function as a withdrawal facility with their own designated space or room (Bennathan and Boxall, 1996). As a provision they offer early intervention (Doyle, 2004) through the application of specialist support (Colley, 2009), and provide an attachment to school (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007) for those children whose social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties would or could not be met in the mainstream classroom alone.

The cohort that attend the NG are often those that have missed out on early developmental opportunities and experiences and the NG is one way, over time, of enabling these children to function socially and emotionally at a more age-appropriate level (Boxall, 2002). The emphasis of a NG therefore, is on social and emotional growth and development (Lucas, 1999) and this is achieved through an environment that offers a secure base for those attending, with routine, predictability, clear boundaries and consistency (Boxall, 2002) that exist within a home-like environment.

Many of the children who attend NGs have become `developmentally stuck` (Bomber, 2007) and accessing the NG enables many to become `unstuck`, by providing them with an opportunity to access 'second chance learning' Winnicott (1965). `Second-chance learning` is key to NG practice and it involves providing the child with opportunities to access experiences that

were unmet during an earlier developmental period, such as early play experiences. This 'second chance learning' is achieved through the support and care provided by the NG staff that replicate the parent-child relationship by engineering a predictable, reliable, trusting, and caring environment in which the children can feel safe enough to take risks, play, explore and learn Boxall, (2002).

NGs have typically taken the guise of what has become known as a `classic model' (Cooper et al., 2001), which is recognizable from the following key principles:

- Is a small supportive class of up to 12 children and usually based in a mainstream school
- Provides a secure, predictable environment where the different developmental needs of each pupil are catered for
- Is staffed by two adults, usually a teacher and teaching assistant, and pupils attend regularly for a substantial part of each week (up to 4 ½ days)
- The ethos focuses on emotional and social growth and development as well as academic progress
- Ensures pupils remain on their mainstream class roll with the expectation that they will return to their class in 2 – 4 terms.
- Staff promote the active involvement of key mainstream staff in the life and learning of the NG, including pastoral and subject staff.

(Adapted from the NG Network, 2010)

More recently, however, over the last decade there has been greater variance in terms of what a NG entails and the principles it advocates. Findings from a national survey into NG practice by Cooper et al., in 2001 suggested that there are four variants of NGs, Including:

- Variant 1: Classic Boxall (Bennathan and Boxall, 1996) as described in the six bullet points above
- Variant 2: Those that differ in structure, i.e. part-time, but adhere to the key principles of the classic approach.
- Variant 3: Groups that call themselves NGs but do not conform to the Boxall principles, and
- Variant 4: Groups which call themselves NGs but which distort or undermine the key principles of the classic model.

The origins of Nurture Groups

The origins of NGs date back over 40 years ago, originally conceptualised in 1969 as the 'classic model' by Marjorie Boxall, an Educational Psychologist in inner London amidst social and economic deprivation. They were formed in response to a significant rise in children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and 'impoverished early nurturing' entering mainstream primary schools (Boxall, 2002). Many of the children arriving in school at this time were judged to be without the prerequisite social and emotional skills necessary to cope with formal education. Therefore, there

was a requirement for schools to adjust to meet the needs of these children through the creation of NGs.

NGs were created to provide an alternative provision for those finding mainstream schooling socially, emotionally or cognitively challenging, in addition to reducing school exclusions. There is an acknowledgement that severely adverse experiences affect social, emotional and behavioural development that can contribute to academic failure or act as a barrier to accessing learning (Bennathan and Boxall, 1996). Therefore, providing an environment based on nurture and reparation was one way for the children to remain in mainstream schooling and receive the individualised support they needed to grow and develop.

To date, NGs continue to be successful and are thriving, in a recent report published by the Nurture Group Network (2010) it was estimated that there are approximately 1000 active NGs within the UK. It is reported that part of the success for the continued growth of this provision is the evidence base and applied psychological theory that underpins their practice (Lucas, 1999; Colwell and O'Connor, 2003 and Doyle, 2004).

The psychological principles of nurture groups

NGs that adhere to the key principles of the `Boxall classic` approaches are heavily rooted in a number of psychological theories (Lucas, 1999). The most prominent of which is attachment theory (Bowlby, 1958, 1969, 1973 and 1980). In his original work, Bowlby argued that babies and young children are

biologically predisposed to seek proximity to their primary caregivers for warmth and protection. The child's primary caregiver, acts as a secure base in which the child can function, develop and grow. According to Bowlby, developing a close emotional and social bond between parent and child is fundamental for the maintenance of a secure attachment (Bowlby, 1969).

The value of applying attachment theory to assisting the understanding of NG practice is that children who are allocated a place in the NG are seen as those children who have missed out on the early experiences that lead to a secure attachment, for example, warm, caring and consistent parenting, where reciprocity and attunement are common place. Consequently, many children attending a NG arrive at school without their attachment needs being fulfilled and display inappropriate behaviours that correspond to Bowlby's (1980) account of attachment disorders such as: difficulties engaging in productive social interaction, displaying withdrawn, avoidant or aggressive behaviour and the inability to sustain attention in novel (learning) situations.

The NGs therefore function as a `bridge' to enable children to access mainstream schooling and this is achieved through providing an environment and relationship that can help develop a secure attachment to their education (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007). The NG environment has features of a safe and caring family home, with soft furnishings and cooking facilities. There is an emphasis on food and part of the routine is sharing breakfast as a group, which provides a forum for social interaction. Attachment theory therefore

helps to construct a NG as a secure base in which children can function and develop emotionally, socially and cognitively (Geddes, 2007). Moreover, for children attending a NG, an attachment to education is also provided indirectly through developing trusting and caring relationships with the NG staff.

Research into attachment has demonstrated that those children who experience secure attachments achieve greater academic success than insecurely attached children, (Levy and Orlans (1998). Insecurely attached children are said to have difficulties with their learning as they are unable to concentrate fully (Bomber, 2007), as their mind is focused on repelling the feelings of insecurity, and they are preoccupied with unresolved attachment difficulties (Ayers et al, 2000, p.55).

Bowlby (1969) proposed that from an early age, children develop an 'Internal Working Model' based on their relationships with their primary caregivers. The Internal Working Model, according to Bowlby, comprises cognitive structures which are constructed through child-carer interactions; the more positive the interaction, the more positive thinking style a child will have and is therefore more likely to form a secure attachment. NGs can be seen as an intervention that seeks to modify negative Internal Working Models, through allowing children access to positive experiences in a caring and secure base; which enables the children to value themselves through their experiences of being valued by others (Cooper and Lovey, 1999).

However, Bowlby's theory has received criticism on a number of counts. The concept of the Internal Working Model has been described by Dunn (1993), as being vaguely conceived. Furthermore, Slater (2007) has questioned the exact nature of how the Internal Working Model helps to ameliorate a child's disadvantages. There is an understanding that cognitive or thinking skills play a role in helping change to occur, however, individual differences such as personality and a child's distinctive environmental factors are overlooked.

Moreover, Bowlby's (1969) claim that negative early experiences predict later poor outcomes, overlooks the possibility that positive interventions, such as those delivered by a NG will make little, if any positive difference; and as such gives little hope for the future for this cohort of children (Slater, 2007). Bowlby's theory has also been criticised on the basis that the underpinnings of attachment are rooted in animal studies and therefore, its applicability to humans has been questioned (Fonagy, 2001), although findings from Ainsworth and Wittig's (1969) "Strange Situation" studies suggests Attachment Theory is a viable and credible theory when applied to human behaviour.

Nurture group's impact at the individual level

The majority of published research in this area has focused exclusively on the NG's positive impact on the individual child, through comparison and control groups (Cooper et al., 2001; Colwell and O'Connor, 2003 and Scott and Lee, 2009) pre and post measures (Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005), over the domains of

social (Doyle, 2001 and Cooper and Whitebread, 2007), emotional (Cooper and Lovey, 1999; Boorn, 2002; and Binnie and Allen, 2008), behavioural (Reynolds et al., 2009 and Boorn et al., 2010) and learning (Cooper et al., 2001; Mackay et al., 2010 and Seth-Smith et al., 2010).

However, at this level NGs are not without their critics. Howes et al., (2003) have questioned the `social cost` of the children attending a NG in being separated from their friends in mainstream classes. Furthermore, there are obvious ethical implications involved in reintegrating children from a NG back into a mainstream class; as this reintegration process can be viewed as yet another loss for the vulnerable child through ending and separating the temporary attachment made with the nurture group staff.

Nurture group's impact on whole-school practice

An interesting and largely under researched area relates to the influence of NGs on whole-school practice.

In 1999, Lucas wrote a paper specifically on this area. The paper was entitled, The Nurturing School: The impact of nurture group principles and practice on the whole school. In this paper Lucas (1999) conceptualises the school as a nurturing community and illustrates how a school can achieve the vision of becoming a nurturing school through the application of NG principles.

The key factors involved in this process according to Lucas (1999) are:

- The school has clear aims, which are known, agreed and supported by all involved (p.15).
- There is liaison between all staff; including the Senior Management Team and that they understand and are on board the nurturing vision.
- Nurture has a place in school policy and is shared by/with all, including parents, through home school liaison
- When the theory underpinning NGs is applied to the whole school with a clear curriculum focus, teaching and learning can become more effective for ALL children. However, what this curriculum would look like or involve is not elaborated on by Lucas
- Having nurturing values explicit in all documentation that reflects the school ethos
- Consistency of sharing nurturing values and modelling good nurturing practice. Once again what good nurturing practice involved is not elaborated on further.
- Regular training to share practice to wider school staff, which can act as an agent for change

In reviewing Lucas' (1999) research there are a number of anomalies. The research is mainly suggestive, it stipulates what would make a 'good' nurturing school if the criteria above were used and psychological theory underpinning NGs was applied to a whole-school approach, yet it does not provide actual evidence of her suggestions being put into practice. Overall, Lucas' (1999) research is based on anecdotal evidence, and not evidence-

based practice, although Lucas's work is a good starting point in envisaging what a nurturing school could entail.

More substantive evidence on whole-school nurturing practice has been reported by Doyle, who has completed a number of studies in this area (2001; 2003 and 2004). Doyle's (2001) research focused on a bespoke reintegration programme for children who had accessed a NG and were making the transition back into mainstream classrooms. Doyle's (2001) research found that a NG could assist the whole school to become more inclusive and promote an increased nurturing ethos through sharing and cascading nurturing practice from an on-site school NG.

In 2003 Doyle found evidence that a NG contributed to the development of a nurturing primary school and the dissemination of nurture group principles between staff had a 'profound effect on whole school development' (p.252). Doyle (2003) suggested as the result of a NG on site, and a bespoke social development curriculum, mainstream classrooms became increasingly nurturing and the principles became entrenched in policies and practices of the whole school. In her research Doyle (2003) documents the changes that occurred in the focus school, these included:

- Physical changes to all classrooms to replicate a NG,
- Opportunities for children to re-experience early play experiences, such as water and sand play

- Implementing a nurturing approach to behaviour management, based on positivity, unconditional positive regard, social learning and modeling positive behaviour, incentives for good choices and a focus on a PSHE (Personal Social Health Education) curriculum

Within the literature there is very limited research that focuses specifically on evidence of whole-school nurturing practice bar Lucas' (1999) and Doyle's (2001, 2002 and 2004) research. There are however, a number of studies that have looked at the NG's impact at individual level and from these studies some positive findings have been recorded regarding NGs impact on whole-school nurturing practice

In their research Binnie & Allen (2008) found having a NG on a school site led to an improved school ethos and increased capacity to support children described as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Like Lucas (1999), they too call for the theoretical underpinnings of NGs to be fully integrated into mainstream environments.

Further research conducted by Cooper et al., (2001) in a longitudinal study found NGs led to whole school developments when mainstream classrooms adopted NG strategies into their daily practice, for example, improved whole school behaviour management. Furthermore, staff's perceptions changed about the children once they were informed of what the NG entailed and why the children were attending, and then staff were more likely to adopt

supporting strategies in the classroom. Cooper et al., (2001) concluded that NGs have the capacity to contribute to the development of a nurturing ethos in schools.

Similarly, Colwell and O'Connor (2003) suggest mainstream schools could become more inclusive if whole-school nurturing approaches were adopted.

Findings from a study conducted by Cheshire (2006) assessed mainstream school staff perceptions regarding NG practice and according to staff views, when there is good communication between the NG staff and school staff it was seen to facilitate success of whole school nurturing practice, suggesting sharing nurturing practice can lead to greater gains at whole school levels.

Aims and purposes of the present study

The aims of the present study were to explore school staff perceptions in relation to whole-school nurturing practice and whether having nurture group facilities on site is beneficial to whole-school practice. These aims were addressed through asking school staff a series of questions relating to whole-school nurturing practice that are shared in the next section.

The present study's research questions

Due to a lack of contemporary studies that have focused on exploring the wider implications of having a NG on a school site, I sought to investigate school staff perspectives to see whether they felt the NG had an influence on the wider school practice. For example: the present study sought to gather

information from school staff regarding the following questions, (which were shaped and influenced by research within this area):

- Does NG practice impact on the wider school culture/community, for example:
    - Other children in the school?
    - Other staff in the school?
- Has having a NG on site improved staff's nurturing practice?
- Is having a NG beneficial to whole-school practice?
- Is there effective communication between the NG and mainstream for this to occur? And
- What is the overall effectiveness of the NG?

Original Fieldwork

How the present study was agreed

The present study developed as the result of a meeting between myself and the school's link Educational Psychologist (EP). The link EP had received a request from the school to help monitor and evaluate certain distinct areas of work the school undertook. One of these areas was to evaluate some aspect of their NG facility. As a result of this initial meeting, a further meeting took place between myself and the Head Teacher of the designated school to clarify the focus of the evaluation. As a result of the meeting with the Head Teacher, the following aims of my involvement were clarified and agreed:

- To explore the school staffs' perceptions in relation to whole-school nurturing practice and whether having a nurture group on the school site is beneficial to this practice.

In agreeing the focus for the present study and gauging the 'voice' of others in relation to the wider school community I was adopting an approach that aligns with my own epistemological views of how knowledge is influenced and constructed; not through the individual but shared as part of a wider socio-cultural community.

Background to the present study

The present study was undertaken to evaluate a primary school's nurturing practice and whether school staff felt it has any impact on wider school practice. The school ran three separate NGs throughout the week; the arrangement of these NGs is depicted in Table 1 below.

Group	*Provision provided*	*Number and age of children*
Group 1	Monday to Thursday mornings	9 x Key stage one children (8 year one and one year two)
Group 2	Tuesday afternoon	10 x Years 3 & 4
Group 3	Wednesday & Thursday afternoons	8 x years 5 & 6

Table 1: Summary of the groups attending three NGs.

Although all groups were part-time they correspond to the second variant of the classic "Boxall" model as described by Cooper et al., (2001), where the "core principles" are still practised, albeit on a concentrated level. The NGs

were in constant use throughout the school week. Only Monday and Friday afternoons were free from children attending the NG and these times were used for NG staff training, planning and liaison.

The NG provided provision for the most vulnerable children in the school across all Key Stages. The criteria for a child's entry to the NG was determined by the completion of a Boxall Profile (a detailed normative, diagnostic instrument used to measure a child's level of behavioural and emotional functioning) (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) and class teacher records. The overarching purpose of the NG, according to the Nurture Teacher is to offer the children a "secure base with consistent rules, routine and people."

All children that attend the NG maintain links with their mainstream classes. Whilst in the NG the children access a curriculum that focuses on promoting social and emotional well-being, emotional literacy and growth, through activities such as Circle Time (Mosley, 1993) and learning through adult-led and modelled reciprocal play and discussion. The structure to each day remains the same to ensure there is an element of predictability, which helps the children feel secure by knowing the routine and expectations.

<u>The wider 'nurturing' picture</u>

The NG evaluated in this study is located at the centre of a mainstream primary school in a densely populated urban district in the East Midlands. The school serves a community in which levels of social and economic

disadvantage are high. A recent OfSTED report (2010) describes the school's pastoral care for those who are most vulnerable, as "Outstanding." The OfSTED report also gives recognition to the NG, which was described as "a very good nurturing provision."

The school is proactive in promoting a whole-school nurturing philosophy through the delivery of a number of other nurturing and creative interventions such as Philosophy for Children (Lipman and Ward-Bynam, 1976) and Theraplay (Booth and Jernberg, 2010).

The procedure of the present study

Following agreement on the aims of my involvement, a questionnaire was devised to elicit school staff perceptions in relation to the on-site NG and its benefit to whole-school nurturing practice. I decided to use questionnaires as a method of data collection due to the time constraints I was working under. Questionnaires are quick to administer and analyse and also are effective in retaining participant confidentiality (Robson, 2002, p.233).

The questionnaire was developed with the characteristics of a nurture group in mind (The Nurture Group Network, 2010) and from the themes that emerged in contemporary research regarding whole-school nurturing practice (Lucas, 1999 and Doyle, 2003).

The questionnaire comprised a mixture of closed questions, that required a YES, NO or PARTIALLY response, and structured questions using scales

developed by Likert (1932) and other rating scales that required a response to be given on a scale of 1 to 10. Rating scales were chosen as they can be administered quickly and responses can easily be coded, (Thomas, 2009). They were also seen as a suitable method as they are a simple and straightforward approach to study and to analysing beliefs (Robson, 2002, p.233). There were 8 questions in total that covered:

- The function and purpose of a NG
- The positive impact on children in the school
- The positive impact on staff in school
- Whether having an NG on site improves nurturing practice
- Whether an NG is beneficial to whole school practice
- Whether there is effective liaison with NG staff
- How effective the NG is overall, and
- How the NG could be developed (due to word limits the answers to this question are not reported).

The full questionnaire is presented in appendix 2.

An information sheet for staff was also devised that explained the purpose of the study and also highlighted the ethical considerations as stipulated by the British Psychological Society (2006) of participating in this study (See appendix 1). Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was shared with the

nurture group staff and Head Teacher to ensure they were fit for purpose and then distributed to the intended audiences.

The information sheet (appendix 1) also made explicit to staff their right to withdraw from the study whenever they wished, even after the data collection had been completed. Staff were also informed that their responses from the questionnaires would remain anonymous as no names were required.

24 members of the school staff from a total of 40, including 16 class teachers and 8 teaching assistants participated in the study. 16 members of staff declined to participate in the study. The selection of the participants was determined by purposive sampling as a particular cohort was targeted and selected, where the specific purpose was to choose those who worked in the school where the NG was situated, so their views on the NG's impact on whole school practice could be elicited.

The following section presents the findings elicited from school staff views using the questionnaires.

Presentation of Findings

The aim of the present study was to explore school staff perceptions in relation to whole-school nurturing practice and whether having an active nurture group on the school site is beneficial to whole school practice. This aim was addressed through asking school staff a series of questions about their views of the nurture group and whole-school nurturing practice. There

were 8 questions in total and the findings gathered from 24 school staff are presented by question below.

Findings from questions 1, 2 and 7 required staff to answer using one of the following responses, YES, NO or PARTIALLY, these responses are presented below.

Question	Choice of responses		
	YES	NO	PARTIALLY
1) Are you aware of the function/purpose of the nurture group in your school?	21	0	3
2) Are the pupils aware of the function/purpose of the nurture group in your school? **	12	0	11
7) Has there been effective liaison with the nurture group staff?	15	1	8

** One member of staff declined to answer question 2

Table 2: Staff responses for questions 1, 2 and 7.

Findings from question 1 suggest the majority of school staff are aware of the function and purpose of the NG. A number of staff elaborated further and the qualitative responses for this question included:

- For staff that responded PARTIALLY they said this was because "they had never worked in the nurture group" but did work with the pupils who attended the NG in the mainstream classroom.
- Other qualitative responses for those who responded YES to question 1: included
    - "*I became more aware of the NG whilst I was studying for my degree"*

- *"To respond to the specific needs of individual children. To develop their well-being to enable them ultimately to have a clear sense of self and to be able to operate with success within a mainstream classroom and the future,"*
- *"To support children who have shown social and emotional difficulties."*
- *"Yes, because I work with children that use the NG."*

Findings for question 2 indicated a more uneven spread of scores, where half of the school staff felt that the pupils were aware of the function/purpose of the NG, whereas the other half of participants felt the children were PARTIALLY aware of the NG function /purpose of the NG.

Of the staff that responded PARTIALLY to question 2: Are the pupils aware of the function/purpose of the nurture group in your school? The following qualitative responses were shared:

- *"I believe children see it (the NG) as a place to go if you're struggling in class"*
- *"I'm not so sure they understand"*
- *"I'm not fully sure, I don't however, think knowledge of objectives is necessary for the children"*
- *"Aware of nurture, possibly not purpose"*
- *"Children who have attended in the past, obviously know all about it. Other children seem to know that it is a different environment for children who need that."*

Qualitative responses from staff that answered YES to question 2 included:

- *"I do believe the children are aware of the group, I think they are aware of the function and the purpose to some extent"*
- *"They know it (the NG) is there and offers Breakfast, emotional help when someone has a worry, a place to go when you need some time."*
- *"Only children who have attended or who have siblings in the NG know about this."*
- "*Probably the pupils that use it (the NG) but perhaps not so much those that don't."*
- *"Children who have been a part of the NG, or have a sibling or friend that has used the resource."*

Responses for question 7: Has there been effective liaison with the nurture group staff? Also received a spread across responses. Further qualitative responses for those that responded PARTIALLY, included:

- " *None of my children attend the NG, but I know that the NG teacher does liaise with staff."*
- *"As a Teaching Assistant, you don't really liaise with the NG staff."*

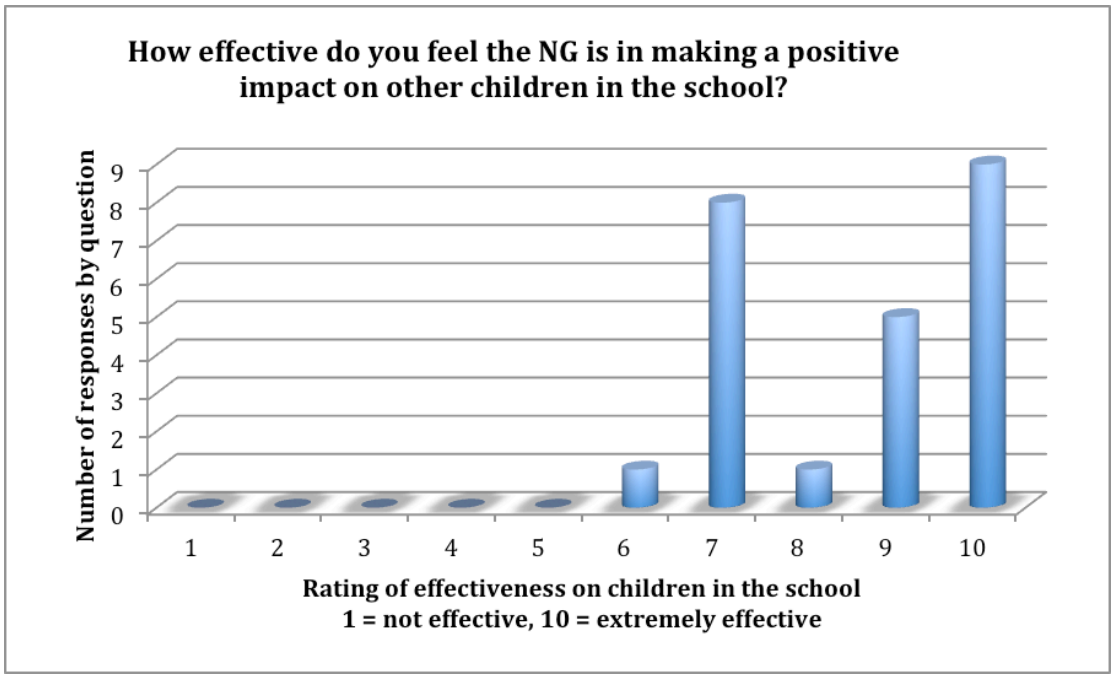
Further qualitative responses for question 7 that answered YES included:

- " *Although we are always in need of revisiting the liaison to ensure the channel for communication remains open and productive."*
- *" I feel fully supported by the NG staff. I think parents can also see how effective both class teacher and NG staff working together can be."*

- *"Verbally good, but the IEPs and paper trail need to be tightened up/more rigorous and understood by all staff."*
- *"As much as time allows."*
- *"Yes, due to co-working with children and families."*
- *"Yes, liaison and sharing information, nurture staff also attend mental well-being team meetings and link in with parents."*

Other questions (3, 4, 5, 6 and 8) used to elicit responses required staff to rate their responses by choosing a number that closely matched their belief between 1 and 10. For example on question 3: How effective do you feel the nurture group is in making a positive impact on other CHILDREN in the school? Rating 1 indicated 'not effective' and rating 10 indicated 'extremely effective.' Staff could rate their response anywhere on the scale 1- 10 depending on their views towards the question asked. Findings for questions: 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 are presented as charts and augmented by qualitative commentary from the school staff.

Question 3: *How effective do you feel the nurture group is in making a positive impact on other CHILDREN in the school*?

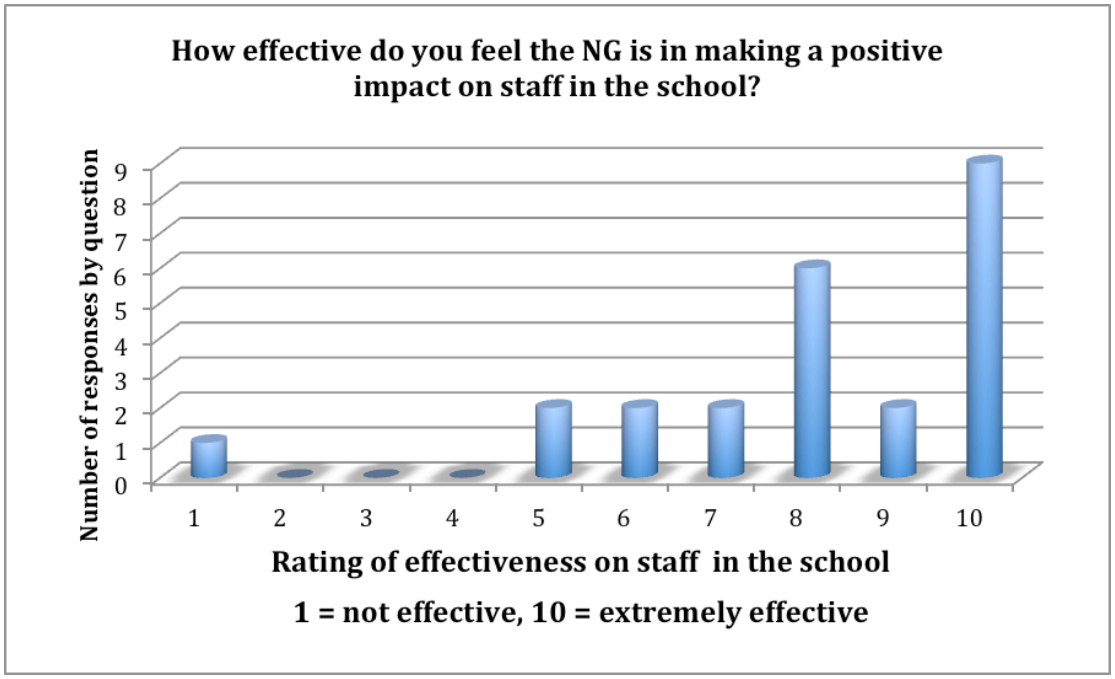


Additional qualitative comments from school staff concerning question 3 included:

- *"Keeps the classroom environment and playground calmer as nurture children are getting a diet that meets their needs, so they don't 'act out' in classroom and playground" (rated 7)*
- *"I think it's extremely effective, we see the benefit everyday in class and in the playground." (rated 10)*
- *"There is less acting out in the classes"*
- *"Rewards are two fold, learning development that can be taken back to classes and time away allows the teacher to focus on the less demanding children in lessons." (rated 10)*

- *"If children had longer access during the day in nurture then they would be able to leave nurture quicker" (rated 7)*
- *"Allows other children to have greater adult time in own class, as needs of nurture children are accommodated. Nurture practice has spread throughout the school and all children are responded to in a nurturing way. The NG has helped to recognise and support the needs of others." (rated 10)*

Question 4: *How effective do you feel the nurture group is in making a positive impact on STAFF in the school?*

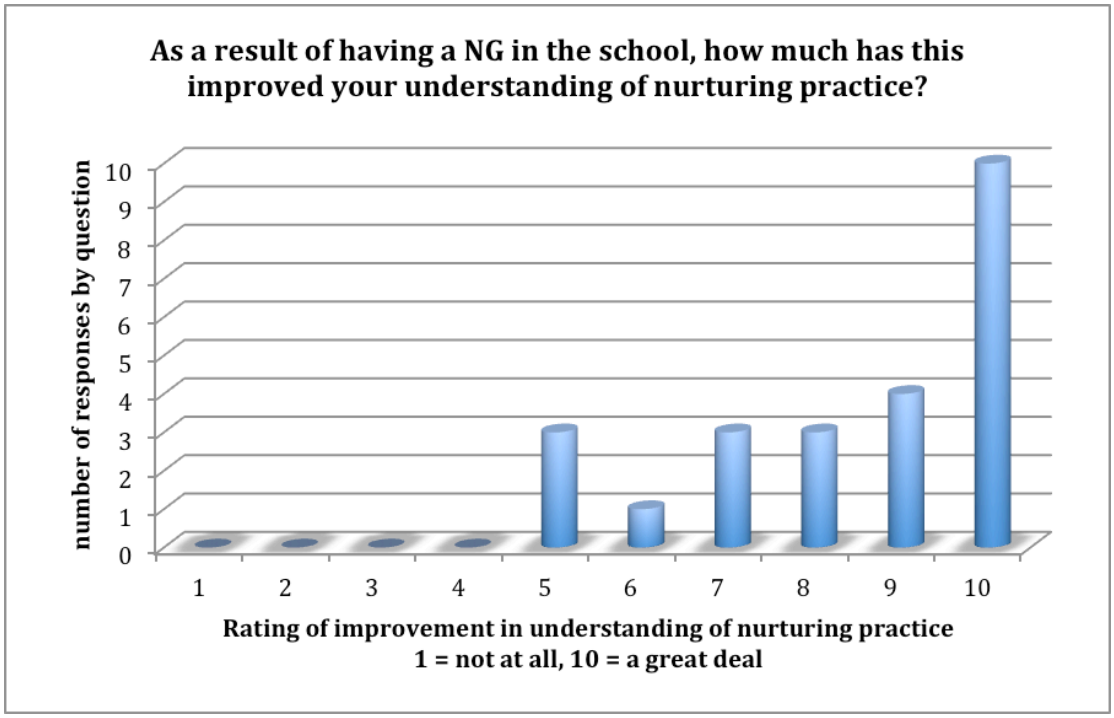


Additional qualitative comments from school staff concerning question 4 included:

- *"Supports mainstream staff with managing and understanding behaviours." X 2 (both rated 10)*
- *"Most new (last 5 years) staff have embraced nurture and its principles and use strategies within their own practice." (rated 8)*

- *"When the nurture children are back in class there is a huge impact on the teaching staff." (rated 10)*
- *"Fewer class disruptions makes teaching and behaviour management easier. Staff feel confident that <u>all</u> children are getting what they need in terms of social, emotional and learning." (rated 5)*
- *"We all need looking after, nurture is for all of us. Most important the children get the support they need, which in turn will give them the chance to enjoy all the benefits of school." (rated 10)*
- *" Pupils enjoy, 1:1 attention and class teacher is free to concentrate on other pupils." (rated 6)*
- *" Can act as both relief from behaviourally challenging children and smoother teaching for remaining pupils." (rated 8)*
- *"It helps to know someone else has the time to unpick some of the problems these children have, which can be lost in a class of 27 children. It also gives you ways to better support these children." (rated 8)*
- *"Staff are able to seek advice from nurture teacher when a child within mainstream class presents with difficult behaviours." (rated 10)*

Question 5: *As a result of having a nurture group in the school, how much has this improved your understanding of nurturing practice?*

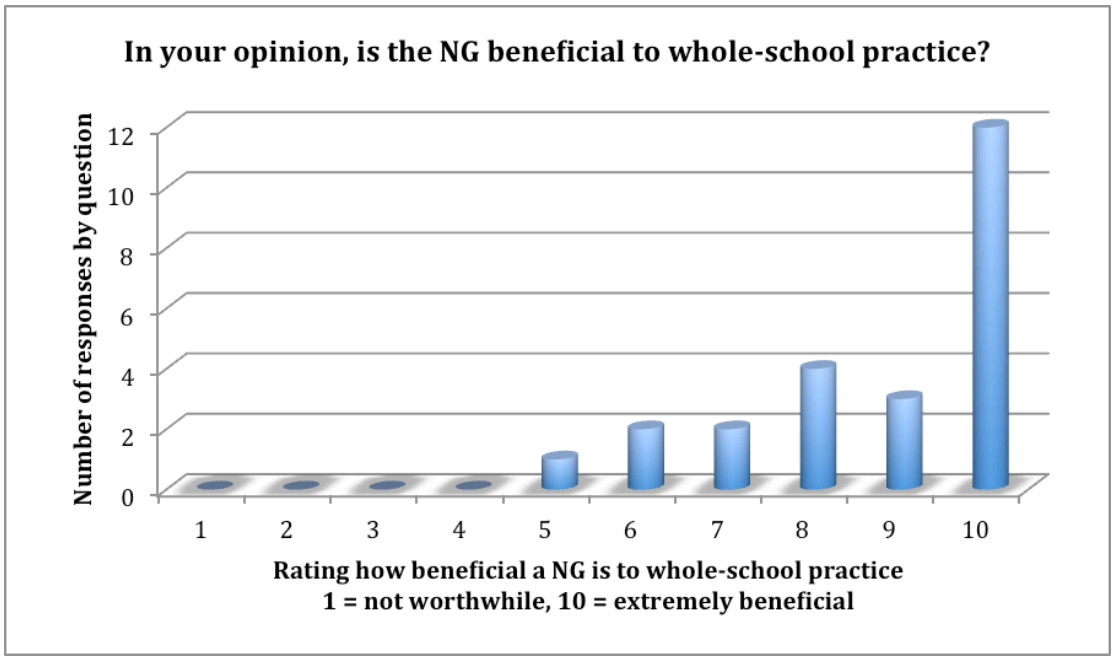


Additional qualitative comments from school staff concerning question 5 included:

- "*Has extended the principles across the school, has lead as whole school training" (rated 10)*
- *"I have not directly been involved and consider my understanding superficial" (rated 5)*
- *"I have very little dealing with the NG" (rated 5)*
- *"Before nurture there wasn't a place for children that needed the extra nurture. Now, not only do we have the best teacher, they have a warm, safe place that they can blossom." (rated 10)*
- *"I've used some practice in my classroom, e.g. quiet/chill out zone." (rated 7)*

- *"Mainly through my own studying, although we did have training last year." (rated 10)*
- *"More insight into a 'nurture class' but already work from a Theraplay model so understand nurture." (not rated).*
- *"Some INSET days have nurture focus to them, there is also ample opportunity to spend time in the NG." (rated 8)*
- *"The NG has given me more insight into how supportive and essential nurture is within schools." (rated 10)*

Question 6: *In your opinion, is the nurture group beneficial to whole-school practice?*

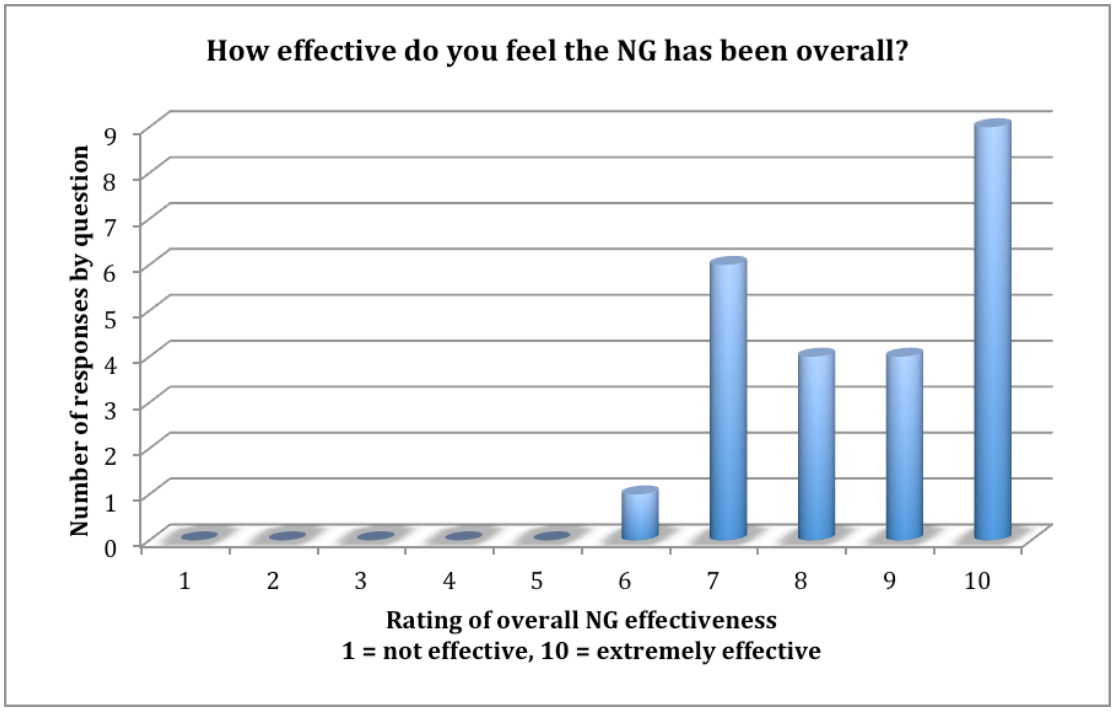


Additional qualitative comments from school staff concerning question 6 included:

- "The longer nurture has been here the more disseminated and understood it has become." (rated 10)

- "If consistent management of children and positive use of specific nurturing language." (rated 10)
- "But children who have access in KS1 would benefit from having more time to access the NG." (rated 10)
- "It is beneficial." (rated 9)
- "Every child needs to feel special and that's what the NG provides. It takes less muscles to smile, and every child and adult returns a smile; all part of nurture." (rated 10)
- "The whole school has adopted a nurturing approach." (rated 9)

Question 8: *How effective do you feel the nurture group has been overall?*



Additional qualitative comments from school staff concerning question 6 included:

- *"Only when children have full access, part-time has lowered the overall benefits." (rated 6)*

- *"Without it (NG) I believe we would have a lot of unhappy children and staff." (rated 10)*
- *"Difficult to determine success, long term changes and how relevant children would be if they weren't involved in nurture." (rated 7)*
- *"Would be higher if they had some access to last years children." (rated 7)*
- *"Has certainly improved and made a difference to children and families." (rated 10)*
- *"There are many children who were not engaging with learning and post NG have engaged – some with remarkable results."*

The findings from this evaluation were also collated and presented in a summative report addressed to the participating school's Head Teacher, which can be found in appendix 3.

Discussion

Discussion of key findings

The present study focused on exploring school staff perceptions in relation to whether having a nurture group on a school site was beneficial to whole-school practice.

Key findings extrapolated from questionnaires from 24 staff suggest the majority, 21 staff were aware of the function and purpose of the NG in their school (responses to question 1). Further analysis of qualitative responses for question 1 suggest staff who had worked in the NG or were in close proximity to the facility had a better understanding of the function and purpose of the

NG, which is not surprising if they have seen the NG practice first-hand. Therefore, awareness of nurturing practices can be raised when it is shared between staff from the NG and mainstream classroom, supporting similar findings from Doyle (2001) and Lucas' (1999) vision of sharing nurturing principles within a school.

However, school staff in this study were not so confident in determining whether pupils in the school were aware of the function/purpose of the NG, where there was a roughly equal spread of scores shared between those that responded 'yes' and those that thought there was 'partial' awareness from this cohort. Once again qualitative responses from staff were helpful in illuminating the answers given. A prominent theme within the responses suggests the children's development or age is a barrier to the pupils fully understanding what 'nurture' means. Furthermore, like question 1, staff felt pupils' awareness of the function/purpose of a NG was improved when the children had either attended themselves or knew another child that had attended the provision, suggesting that to truly understand 'nurture' one has to personally experience it or share it with another (Cheshire, 2006). Lucas (1999) suggests for a school to embrace nurture it must involve all those within its community, including asking the children their views on nurturing, something the staff in this study did not overlook.

Further findings from the present study suggested roughly two thirds of the school staff felt that there was effective liaison between themselves and the

NG staff regarding nurturing practice (question 7). According to Doyle (2001 and 2003) this is one way to assist a whole school in becoming more inclusive and promoting a nurturing ethos, as when nurturing practice is shared amongst school staff it can become disseminated into the wider school community (Doyle, 2003 p.252). However, one third of the staff (8) suggested that there had been 'partial' liaison between NG staff. Some of the reasons given for this 'partial' liaison included those that reported because they did not work directly with children that accessed the provision they felt they had no need to liaise with the NG staff, suggesting this member of staff viewed the NG as a provision for 'individuals' rather than as a part of the school community. Furthermore, some staff also reported that their role (Teaching Assistant) prevented them from liaising with NG staff.

This raises doubts about whether the NG within the present study had impacted on the whole school practice if Teaching Assistant's (TAs) did not receive ongoing liaison about 'nurture.' This is a finding that contrasts with Lucas' (1999) vision of what a 'nurturing school' would look like, as according to Lucas (1999) all staff have a role to play within whole-school nurturing practice.

Furthermore, the exclusion of an essential classroom resource such as TAs in 'nurture' practice is unlikely to benefit the 'upwards and outwardly spiralling process of hope and growth' that Boxall (2002, p.18) claimed nurture can bring to a school, as nurture is about building positive relationships at all levels. With this in mind TAs are most often the main adult within a

mainstream classroom that works directly with the pupils, therefore, through sharing nurture practice with TA's there is scope to cascade the skills directly into the mainstream classroom though daily practice.

Staff did however, report that there was good liaison between the NG staff and parents and with wider 'nurture' provision such as the school's Mental Well-being Team, suggesting that the NG was not the only form of 'nurturing' practice adopted by the school.

Additional findings suggested that the majority of school staff feel that the NG has a positive impact on the other children in the school (not attending the NG). 9 of the 24 participants rated this question 10 (extremely effective, whereas another 5 rated 9, and 8 rated it 7, suggesting overall, staff felt the NG does have a positive impact on other children in this particular school. Further qualitative comments suggested that there was a noticeable improvement within behaviour management of the children, as found by Cooper et al. (2001) in their study. There were also reports that the NG had helped to recognise and support the needs of others and this increased capacity to support mainstream children, which lends support to Binnie and Allen's (2008) NG work.

Findings from questionnaire responses also suggest that staff feel that the NG is making a positive impact on staff in the school. 9 of the 24 staff reported this impact as extremely effective (10 out of 10 on the rating scale), whereas

other responses ranged from 1 out of 10 (not effective), to 9 out of 10. Staff quotes suggest the NG practice has aided their knowledge of, and effective management of pupils' behaviour, findings also reported in Binnie and Allen (2008), Doyle, (2003) and Cooper et al's., (2001) research. In addition, by adopting 'nurturing' principles into their own practice some staff also appeared to have a greater understanding that by tackling the behaviour first, learning follows, a sentiment advocated by Bennathan and Boxall (1996).

10 out of 24 staff reported that having a NG in school had improved their understanding of nurturing practice 'a great deal' (10/10 on the scale) and none of the staff responded that it had 'not improved' their understanding of nurturing practice. This provides tentative evidence that NGs can lead to whole-school developments in understanding nurturing practices, whether it is implemented is another consideration altogether. Furthermore, staff quotes suggest that having a NG in school led to whole-school training and in some instances there were reports that some staff replicated parts of the NG environment by developing quiet zones in their classrooms.

Key findings suggested that some staff had no involvement with the NG or the principles advocated, suggesting that there was not complete 'whole school' involvement from all staff in the school. Furthermore, staff also reported that it was not the influence of the NG in the school that improved their understanding of nurturing practice as they already worked within a nurturing way through the application of Theraplay (Booth and Jernberg,

2010), which is a relation-based play approach that applies principles of attachment theory. However, half of the staff (12) reported that the NG had been beneficial to whole school practice itself. With some staff reporting that *'the whole school has adopted a nurturing approach'* however, whether this can be attributed specifically to the NG or to other forms of nurturing practice that co-existed within the school is difficult to verify from the questions used in this study.

When asked about the overall effectiveness of the NG, staff responses predominantly fell towards the extremely effective end of the scale (10/10 on the scale) and no responds were given below 6/10, suggesting the 24 staff who participated in this study felt that the NG was effective. Quotes from staff indicated that most responses referred to the individual children attending the NG, not whole school effectiveness, for example, that children would benefit from a full-time NG provision, and that attendance to the NG, aided the children's engagement to learning, supporting Cooper et al, (2001) earlier findings. There were however a minority of responses that reported the NG's effectiveness beyond the immediate school to families of those attending the NG.

So what are the implications of these findings to the school's whole school nurturing practices?

Reflections of the study's findings in relation to whole-school nurturing practices

Overall, findings from this study suggest that that NG and its principles in this study had not been disseminated to all corners of the school, as there were still some areas where staff reports focused on the individual impact and not necessarily the whole school. Furthermore although it was reported that the NG was seen to have a positive impact on staff, and a particular significance was classroom behaviour management, there were some staff that felt excluded from developing their nurturing practice, suggesting that the practice in this study, was not quite 'whole school' and inclusive.

Likewise it was acknowledged by the majority of staff that the NG also had a positive impact on other children attending the school. However, this appears to be in direct response to the children attending the NG being more calmer and noticeable improvements were seen in their behavior, which indirectly impacted on 'other' children. It could be argued that the NG was not directly effective to the 'other' children but through helping others freed up time and resources to help them engage with their learning.

Analysis of qualitative staff responses suggest the effectiveness of the NG in this study focused more on those that were in some way connected to the NG, such as the children that attend, or staff that visit the provision than the wider school community. There were 'pockets' of reports from some staff (not all) that there was a 'nurturing vision' within the school, but it is difficult to conclude that it is whole school nurture practice, as it was a long way short of

Lucas's (1999) 'organic whole.' Some 'nurture' principles appear to feed into the mainstream classrooms, but not all classrooms and there are reports that there is 'effective liaison' between NG staff and mainstream staff, but not all staff.

Although there were reports of improved understanding regarding nurturing that had led to further training in nurture principles in the school, it was not to the extent Lucas (1999) envisages a 'nurturing school' or to the extent Doyle (2003) describes at policy or curriculum level. Furthermore, it is difficult in this study to tease out and isolate what 'nurturing' impact the NG had to whole school practice, as there were a number of other 'nurturing' practices that occurred alongside its application in the school, such as Theraplay (Booth and Jernberg, 2010), and the school having its own in-house 'Mental Well-being Team.'

Limitations of the present study

There were a number of key limitations to the present study. The first and most prominent limitation surrounds the choice of methods used. In using a questionnaire that elicited information through closed questions such as, YES/NO responses and rating scales (1 to 10) it limited the amount of rich information I could extrapolate from staff opinions about whole school nurturing practice. Although under each question featured in the questionnaire there was a space provided for staff to elaborate on their responses very few staff completed the qualitative comments section.

The closed questions also meant that there was no scope to tease out the 'origins' of nurturing practice within the school from other 'nurturing' interventions that were used. Having the qualitative response section under each question was helpful in illuminating the staff responses. However, on reflection, I feel an alternative methodology such as focus groups, where there is an opportunity for free discussions, would have elicited richer and more in depth information regarding whole-school nurturing practice. In my original brief I did intend to use focus groups, however, due to a combination of time constraints and reluctance from staff it was not pursued as a choice of method.

Furthermore, on reflection of my practice in this study, a useful alternative methodology would have been to use 'Realistic Evaluation' (Pawson and Tilley (2010), where the emphasis is on collaborative research with stakeholders. Using Realistic Evaluation would have enabled me to look at why and how, nurture was used within the school and its impact in greater detail.

A further limitation of the study is related to those who completed the questionnaires. All respondents were self-selected and the questionnaire was open to all staff in the school (40). However, only 24 responses were collected. It could therefore be argued that those who were motivated to respond and share their views through the questionnaires were those that were positive about nurturing practice, and as such the overall findings may reflect a biased perspective.

Future directions for research on systemic nurture practice:

There is limited contemporary research that looks specifically at whole school nurturing practices and the impact a NG has on these practices. In conducting the present study the findings provide further ideas for future research. Notable areas include:

- Examining NG practice to further determine the criteria required to provide a whole-school nurturing approach. Although there are some studies that have found valuable components to promote whole school nurturing practice (Doyle, 2003), most are not applied in practice (Lucas, 1999), so further research is required to elucidate this question
- As a result of the present study it was acknowledged that other forms of nurturing co-exist and have an impact on practice within a school. It would be beneficial to discover the extent of nurturing approaches that exist in schools and how this shapes the whole-school practice, and which forms of nurturing are seen as the most beneficial for enhancing and sustaining whole school nurturing practices.
- A lost 'voice' with NG research is that of parents and pupils. There is benefit in researching parents' views on what nurture means to them, what they feel the function and purpose are of a NG. This would open up further opportunities to share nurturing principles and good practice that could be replicated in the family home; a vision that supports a whole-school community vision of nurturing, where ALL those connected to a school are aware of the functions and purposes of a NG.

- It would be beneficial to conduct further research that adopts an action research or Realistic Evaluation methodology to gain a richer and more 'organic' feel for nurturing within schools as communities.

Recommended future whole school/systemic nurturing practice

Following the completion of the present study, it raises further questions and scope to develop whole-school nurturing practice and the following recommendations may be suitable:

- Ensuring senior managers and school governors are involved as 'nurturing stakeholders' and understand the function and purpose of a NG and the emotional and academic benefits they can bring to a whole school
- The promotion of a collaborative 'nurturing' approach between NG staff and mainstream school staff to share/cascade good nurturing practice and develop a 'true' whole-school nurturing vision and ethos. Sharing nurturing principles is essential to sustain and maintain nurturing practice and develop a 'nurturing school' (Lucas, 1999)
- Opening up the NG to all staff, children and parents, not just those in close proximity to the provision or those that use it. Through advocating a collaborative approach to 'nurture', where the whole school community has access to the NG, we can fully appreciate and embrace 'nurture' and develop a 'nurturing school.' The more people in a school that have access to a NG will make it more likely that they understand the function and purpose of such provision and make nurturing principles and values easier to disseminate throughout a school community. This could be achieved through:
  - An 'open door' policy to the NG for staff and parents

  - Regular ‘drop in’ sessions to observe ‘nurturing’ practice
  - Open days to raise awareness and understanding of nurturing values that advocate and embed nurture principles to all to foster a whole school encompassing nurturing ethos
- The positioning of a NG needs consideration. Newman et al., (2007, p.432) suggests having a NG at the centre of a school, makes it easier for nurturing ethos to dissipate through the school
- Ensuring nurture is placed centrally within the school curriculum and is not just part of the hidden curriculum,
- Ensuring school policy reflects and advocates nurture to all
- Access to regular training related to ‘nurture’ to embed and develop skills to empower all staff to become nurturing practitioners

<u>Implications and recommendations for EP eco-systemic nurturing practice</u>

In discussing whole-school nurturing practice in the present study it raises implications for Educational Psychology (EP) practice at whole school or eco-systemic levels.

EPs are well placed to encourage the development of nurturing practices to the whole school as NGs were originally conceived by Boxall, who was an EP, and the theory underpinning NGs is psychologically focused and therefore a core element of the EPs everyday practice as applied psychologists and practitioners.

Through their knowledge base, EPs can share their knowledge of psychological theory to schools, such as Attachment Theory, Emotional Literacy, Social Learning, Unconditional Positive Regard, as part of the development of whole-school nurturing practice. This sharing could be in the guise of delivering training to schools and disseminating how nurture can improve whole-school practice and communities. Lucas (1999) had a vision that the sharing of this psychological knowledge could act as 'an agent of change' in helping schools to become nurturing communities for all not just the children in the NG.

As previously mentioned, EPs are in good position to support such a nurturing school community vision through their psychological knowledge and one way is through the application of community-based psychology. Through applying community psychology in schools and treating schools as a community in their own right, nurture can be understood through appreciating the social context with which it is placed (whole-school).

This study has shown that for change to occur there is greater benefit at looking at the level of analysis beyond the individual, to the social or systemic level. According to Orford (2008, p.8) the emphasis of community psychology is about 'prevention, intervention and policy change at a non-individual level.' It therefore makes sense to apply these principles to whole-school nurturing practices and by sharing psychology with others, EPs can empower staff to be

better prepared, skilled and informed to work with the NG cohort and better meet all those involved in practicing and receiving nurture.

Conclusion

Research has documented over time that NG's are a valuable school provision and intervention for supporting individual children's social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Less so is known or published regarding the NGs impact on whole school nurturing practices. This understudied area was the focus of the present study where school staffs' views were explored to illuminate whether a NG benefitted whole-school nurturing practice.

Key findings from this study suggest that a NG can only be beneficial to the 'whole school' practice' if the 'whole school community' is actively involved in advocating nurturing principles in praxis. Therefore, for nurture to be successful in a school and to be recognised as whole school 'nurturing' practice it needs <u>all</u> connected to the school involved in a vision of 'nurture,' which will facilitate and foster an all-encompassing ethos and school community actively dedicated to nurturing practice.

If schools are to adopt a whole school 'nurturing' vision they must function as an organic whole. EPs can support this process through sharing their knowledge of psychology that underpins nurture and nurturing philosophy and practice to schools and aiding the development of schools as 'nurturing systems and communities' through the application of interactionist perspectives, eco-systemic and community psychology.

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Appendices: Appendix 1: Information sheet to school staff

My name is Will Cross, I am a Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist currently employed by ……Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and based at the……..

I am presently involved in a study at your school, to explore perceptions of nurture group practice, with a specific focus on how nurture groups contribute to whole-school practice. As staff of the school, your views are important and to explore them I would be grateful if you could complete a questionnaire; this should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

A Copy of the questionnaire is enclosed for your perusal. The questionnaire aims to explore school staff perceptions of nurture group practice and its impact on whole-school practice.

All responses from the questionnaire will remain strictly confidential and all information that you give will remain anonymous. You will not be required to include your name anywhere on the questionnaire; therefore, no one will be able to trace the information you provide back to you.

Please note that you have the right to withdraw from the study whenever you wish; even after the data collection has taken place. All questionnaires will be stored securely and destroyed once the information has been collated. I will also provide a feedback session to share the findings of this study.

If you would like further information, I am happy to be contacted on ……..

Thank you, your time and participation in this study is greatly valued and appreciated.

Will Cross
Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 2: Whole–school Questionnaire:
The impact of a Nurture Group on whole-school practice.

1) Are you aware of the function/purpose of the nurture group in your school?

☐YES ☐NO ☐ PARTIALLY (please tick/highlight a box)

Please comment:

_____

_____

_____

2) Are the pupils aware of the function/purpose of the nurture group in your school?

☐YES ☐NO ☐ PARTIALLY (please tick/highlight a box)

Please comment:

_____

_____

_____

3) How effective do you feel the nurture group is in making a positive impact on other CHILDREN in the school? (Please circle/highlight a number)

Not effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 extremely effective

Any Comments:

_____

_____

_____

4) How effective do you feel the nurture group is in making a positive impact on STAFF in the school? (Please circle/highlight a number)

Not effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 extremely effective

Any Comments:

_____

_____

_____

5) As a result of having a nurture group in the school, how much has this improved your understanding of nurturing practice? (Please circle/highlight a number)

Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 A great deal

Any Comments:

_____

_____

_____

6) In your opinion, is the nurture group beneficial to whole-school practice? (Please circle/highlight a number)

Not worthwhile 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely beneficial

Please comment:

_____

_____

_____

7) Has there been effective liaison with the nurture group staff?

☐YES ☐NO ☐ PARTIALLY (please tick/highlight a box)

Please comment:

_____

_____

_____

8) How effective do you feel the nurture group has been overall?
(Please circle/highlight a number)

Not at all effective 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Extremely effective

Please comment:

_____

_____

_____

9) Please share any suggestions that you think could help develop the nurture group in the future.

Please return this questionnaire to ……in the nurture group by …..

Thank you your time and participation is greatly appreciated

Appendix 3:
An evaluation of a Key Stage one nurture group at Rollright Primary School

Summary of report

This report presents the findings from an evaluation of a Key Stage one nurture group (NG) that was conducted to ascertain what difference the facility made to children's social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs and to whole-school nurturing practice. Data was gathered through questionnaires that were distributed to and completed by school staff (24), children attending the NG (8) and their parents (5), and augmented by Boxall Profile scores (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998). Findings from the evaluation indicate greater differences and improvements were reported in meeting the children's social and emotional needs than behaviour and learning and information gathered from school staff views on the nurture group's impact on whole-school nurturing practice suggest that 50% of staff feel that having an NG in the school has been extremely beneficial to this practice.

Literature review

NGs are an alternative form of educational provision located within mainstream schools that function as a withdrawal facility with their own designated space or room. They have been described as offering specialist support (Colley, 2009), as an early intervention (Doyle, 2001) and as providing a means of educational attachment (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007) for those children whose social, emotional, behavioural (SEB) and learning difficulties would not be met in the mainstream classroom.

Many of the children who attend NGs have become what Bomber (2007) terms `stuck developmentally` and accessing a NG enables many to become 'unstuck', providing them with an opportunity to access what Winnicott (1965) referred to as `second-chance learning'. `Second-chance learning' involves providing the child with opportunities to access experiences that were missed or unmet during an earlier developmental period. In the NG this is achieved through NG staff modelling and replicating the parent-child relationship through the provision of a predictable, reliable, trusting, caring and supportive environment in which the children can feel safe enough to take risks, explore and learn. (Boxall, (2002) and Cooper and Lovey, (1999).

According to Cooper and Tiknaz (2005, p.211) NG's serve two central aims:

1) To provide children with an environment to facilitate social, emotional, behavioural and cognitive development;
2) To remove any barriers in relation to those factors (SEB and learning) in order to prepare children for functioning constructively in mainstream schooling.

Attendance at a NG can therefore, be seen as providing a `bridge' to permanent and full-time placement in mainstream classrooms (Cooper, in Hunter-Carsch et al, 2006), where NGs provide positive and reparative experiences, which facilitate the likelihood that children will engage with school and their learning.

Nurture group effectiveness

Evaluative research conducted on NGs has indicated positive effects in terms of meeting children's social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs. A longitudinal study conducted by Cooper et al (2001) investigated the effectiveness of NGs in 25 schools where children attending NGs were compared to children with and without SEB difficulties but attending mainstream school. Findings indicate that children attending the NG made greater improvements than the comparative sample in emotional and behavioural functioning on measures such as the strength and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997) and the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998). Further findings extracted from questionnaires indicated that school staff reported progress in children's educational attainment in English, Maths and Science National Curriculum scores. Findings from the majority of parents suggested there were positive effects on their child's behaviour and enjoyment of school, although there were some reports that their children's academic achievement had lowered since attending the nurture group, suggesting, meeting the academic needs of children is not a priority within NG's. Findings gathered from children attending the NG highlighted social and emotional benefits from forging positive relationships with the NG staff.

Cooper and Whitebread (2007) found significant improvements in NG pupils in terms of social, emotional and behavioural functioning from SDQ and Boxall Profile pre and post scores. The study also found support to suggest meeting social and emotional needs first enables academic progression, as social and emotional improvements were evidenced in the first two terms children attended the NG and gains in cognitive engagement were seen to improve in terms three and four.

Further evidence from Binnie and Allen (2008) who evaluated six part-time NG's found improvements in teacher and parent perceptions of children's behaviour, confidence and academic progress. In the evaluation of nurturing practice in three schools, Sanders (2007) elicited school staff, parents' and child views through questionnaires and found two thirds of teachers perceived children who had attended a NG to be better motivated to complete academic tasks and work independently on their return to the mainstream class. Further improvements were recorded in social interaction with peers and improved confidence as a learner. Parents reported seeing an increase in their child's confidence levels, whereas NG children reported making more friendships.

Through the analysis of data collected from three case studies and staff questionnaires Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) found that staff viewed the NG as having a significant contribution to the progress in children's social, emotional and behavioural development. However, similar gains were not evidenced in educational progress due to poor liaison between NG and mainstream staff.

There are further indicators from research that NGs lead to improved social and emotional outcomes for children. From the evaluation of five part-time NGs, Scott and Lee (2009) found that children made significant improvements in Boxall profile scores when compared to mainstream children. Scott and Lee (2009) also concluded, the younger the pupil accessed a NG, the more the social and emotional gains were

evidenced. Further research evaluating NG practice has evidenced positive outcomes for children in self-management (Cooper and Lovey, 1999); social skills (Doyle, 2001); confidence (Boorn, 2002) and self-esteem (Colwell and O'Connor, 2003) when compared to mainstream controls.

A theme throughout the NG literature relates to how improvements that are evidenced in social, emotional and behavioural development enable further improvements in learning to occur. Reynolds et al (2009) found through addressing emotional and behavioural difficulties in vulnerable children, quantitative gains in academic achievement were made. More recently Seth-Smith et al (2010) found academic gains for 89 children in 10 NGs and MacKay et al (2010) found a clear link between attachment, academic achievement and impact of NGs; suggesting that NGs directly address key attachment issues and that by doing so they have a beneficial impact on academic achievement MacKay et al (2010, p106).

There is also substantive evidence to suggest NGs can make a positive impact on whole-school practice. In evaluating 6 schools, Binnie and Allen (2008) concluded that having a nurture group on the school site increased staff capacity to support children with social, emotional and behavioural needs and also according to head teacher reports improved the school ethos. Cooper et al (2007) also found that NGs make a significant contribution to mainstream schools by helping them to expand their capacity to cater for the needs of children with social and emotional difficulties. Furthermore, they proposed NGs have the potential to produce positive outcomes across many variables, including parents, children and school staff and findings from this study suggest 96% of 79 teachers believed that having an NG in school had a positive impact on the school as a whole. This positive impact included the following key features:

- The development of more nurturing attitudes and practices throughout the school
- Contribution of nurturing principles to whole school policies
- Increased sense of empowerment with 'difficult' children
- Evidence of an increased awareness of developmental issues and the relationship between social-emotional factors and learning

Further evidence from Sanders (2007) found that a whole-school approach is critical to ensure a successful NG, concluding it is imperative all staff have been briefed about the principles of the group and type of provision it offers. In her study, Sanders found schools that had a NG reported a calmer atmosphere, fewer behavioural incidents and an enhanced whole-school behaviour management approach.

However, NGs are not without their critics. Howes et al (2003) have questioned the 'social cost' of the children attending a NG in being separated from their friends in mainstream classes. Furthermore, there are ethical implications to reintegrating children from a NG back into mainstream classes, as this reintegration process can be viewed as yet another loss for the vulnerable child through ending and separating the temporary attachment made with the nurture group staff.
Further criticism has been documented on the long-term benefits of nurture groups. O'Connor and Colwell (2002) found a relapse in emotional and social functioning on the Boxall Profile for children who had left the NG after two years, indicating that the NG may only provide temporary alleviation of social and emotional difficulties, an idea that also

supports Bowlby's (1969) view that early negative experiences continue to cause later difficulties.

Background

From November 2010 to January 2011 I attended your school to conduct an evaluation of your key stage one nurture group facility. The purpose of the evaluation was to explore perceptions of nurture group practice within your school, with a specific focus on how your nurture group contributed to whole-school nurturing practice and also what difference it made to the pupils attending the facility in terms of their social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs.

The information for this evaluation was gathered through a series of questionnaires devised by me and distributed to children in the key-stage one nurture group, the parents/carers of children attending the key-stage one nurture group and school staff. A first set of questionnaires was distributed to parent/carers, pupils in the nurture group and school staff to determine what difference it had made to the individual child attending the nurture group. A Further set of questionnaires were distributed to school staff to ascertain what discernable differences the nurture group had on the whole school nurturing practice.

Aims and purposes of the study

As a result of the meeting with the Head Teacher and NG staff at your school, three research aims became clear:

1). To explore the impact of the nurture group at individual level; on those children attending the provision, in terms of making a difference to their social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs
2). To gather information from a variety of sources, including mainstream staff, the children attending the nurture group and parental views; to help explore perceptions about the effectiveness of attending a nurture group.
3). To explore school staff perceptions in relation to whole-school nurturing practice and whether having a nurture group on school the site is beneficial to whole school practice.

Research questions

From these three aims the following research questions were used as the focus of the research:

1) What difference does the nurture group make to children attending the provision? This question was assessed in the domains of social, emotional, behaviour and learning through asking questions to mainstream staff, nurture group staff, the children attending the nurture group and parental views.
2) What impact does the nurture group have on whole-school practice? This question was addressed through asking all school staff a series of questions relating to whole-school nurturing practice.

Summary of Method

Participants & sampling

The sample consisted of 8 key stage one pupils, (4 girls and 4 boys), and the sample children's parents (5). Additionally, 24 members of the school staff participated in the study. The selection of the participants was determined by purposive sampling as a particular cohort was targeted and selected; where the specific purpose was to choose those who were in some way connected to the nurture group.

The chosen method of collecting data was through the use of questionnaires, where four separate questionnaires were developed. These questionnaires were developed with the characteristics of a nurture group in mind (The Nurture Group Network, 2009) and from the themes that emerged in contemporary research across the domains of children's social needs, emotional needs, behavioural needs, and impact on learning and whole-school nurturing practice.

The questionnaires comprised a mixture of closed questions, that required a YES, NO or PARTIALLY response, and structured questions using scales developed by Likert (1932) and other rating scales that required a response to be given on a scale of 1 to 10. Rating scales were seen as a suitable method as they are a simple and straightforward approach to study and analyse beliefs (Robson, 2002, p.233) something each questionnaire attempted to measure in this research.

The questionnaires focused on eliciting views at two levels:

1) The individual level: which focused specifically on the children attending the nurture group and what difference it made to their social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs,
2) The whole-school or systemic level: which focused on evaluating the impact the nurture group had on whole-school nurturing practice

Parent and child questionnaires

These questionnaires focused specifically on what difference the nurture group made to the children attending the facility. Both questionnaires were distributed to parents of each child attending the nurture group and accompanied by a letter that explained the purpose of the study and also highlighted the ethical considerations as stipulated by The British Psychological Society (BPS) (2006) This letter also formed the basis of the parental consent. The parents' questionnaire contained five questions, four of which focused on whether they agreed or disagreed that their child's behaviour, learning, social skills and emotional development had improved since their inclusion to the nurture group.

The questionnaire devised to elicit the children's responses contained five likert scale questions relating to how the nurture group had helped them to feel different about their behaviour, learning, feelings and making friends (social) and replicated the domains listed in the parental questionnaires. Each question included a series of facial

expressions to denote what the responses implied and also to help the children understand the scale of moving from a strong disagreement (unhappy face) to a strong agreement (happy face).

School staff questionnaires

Two different questionnaires were devised to elicit responses from school staff in relation to:

1) The impact of the nurture group on whole-school practice, and
2) The impact on the child attending the nurture group

A letter that explained the purpose of the study and also highlighted the ethical considerations also accompanied these questionnaires, like the parental questionnaires.

The questionnaire that focused on the impact of the nurture group on whole-school practice sought to elicit staff perceptions in relation to the function and purpose of the nurture group and its effectiveness in making a positive impact on children and staff in the school and whether having a nurture group in the school had improved, and was beneficial to whole-school practice. The questionnaire that focused directly on how the nurture group had impacted on the pupils attending the facility, focused on similar domains to those in the parental and child questionnaires, such as social, emotional, behavioural and learning.

All questionnaires were shared with the nurture group staff and Head Teacher to ensure they were fit for purpose and then distributed to the intended audiences, responses and Boxall Profile data took 3 weeks to collect.

Findings: Impact at individual level

Parental responses

Table 1 illustrates the findings from the 5 parents who participated in the study, the following responses were given in relation to whether they agreed/disagreed that they had seen improvements in their child since their inclusion to the nurture group. The findings also demonstrated that one parent who strongly disagreed that their child's behaviour had improved, also noted that their child had become more disobedient since their inclusion to the nurture group.

Question: Improvements have been seen in child's:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1) Behaviour	1	2		2	
2) Confidence			2	2	1
3) Social skills			4	1	
4) Emotions		1	3	1	

Table 1: Parental responses (see appendix 2 for full questions

Findings for question 5 which requested parents to complete a scaling question to rate the overall effectiveness of the nurture group on a scale of 1 to 10, (where 1 means not effective and 10 means extremely effective) in meeting their child's needs indicated that 2 parents chose 6, and the 3 remaining parents chosen a 7, 8 and 9. One of the parents, who rated the nurture group a 6, did stipulate that their child had been more motivated to go to school since their inclusion to the group.

Pupil responses

The findings obtained from the 8 pupils in this study indicate most pupils strongly agreed that the nurture group had helped to feel different about coming to school, their feelings and also socialising and making friends. However, there was less agreement from pupil perceptions in relation to the nurture group helping them to feel different about their behaviour and learning.

Question: The nurture group has helped me to feel different about:	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neither agree or disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
1) Coming to school			2		6
2) My behaviour			5	1	2
3) My learning	2	1	2	1	2
4) My feelings		1	2		5
5) Making friends			1	1	6

Table 2: Pupil responses

School staff responses

The findings collected from 24 school staff in relation to the benefits of attending the nurture group indicate that the majority of staff perceive the nurture group to be beneficial to the pupil in terms of improving confidence, emotional safety and security and social skills

Question: Children attending the nurture group have displayed Improvements and progress in:	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neither agree or disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
1) Their confidence			2	7	15
2) Their learning	1	1	7	5	10
3) Their emotions				4	20
4) Their behaviour			1	12	11
5) Their social skills			4	6	14

Table 3: Staff responses in relation to impact on pupil attending the nurture group.

Further qualitative data from staff responses

Some of the staff elaborated on their answers and donated additional narrative responses, these included:
In response to question two regarding pupils' improvements in their learning one staff member had seen improved "*confidence in reading and wanting to read*." Moreover, further responses indicated that some staff suggested that children attending the nurture group did not benefit academically in the short-term and "*could only benefit academically after their social and emotional needs had been met first*."
Some staff suggested that it was difficult to say whether the nurture group could be attributed to improvements in the pupils behaviour "*as nurture is only one variable and other intervention exist in the school that help promote positive behaviour, such as after school clubs.*" However, another member of staff suggested that the nurture group pupils often became role models and shared calming strategies with their mainstream classmates.

Boxall Profile comparisons

Comparative Boxall Profile data collected by the children's Class Teacher was used to assess any changes that had occurred over a 5-month period from June 2010 to November 2010 for 7 of the 8 pupils. Analysis of the Boxall scores indicate most of the children's scores show negative differences were recorded over both the developmental strand and diagnostic profile with the exception of minimal gains recorded for 3 of the 7 children. These gains were evidenced in the `participates constructively` subscale (b), which includes listening and showing an interest in other children's views. The same 3 children also recorded gains on `shows insightful involvement`, subscale (d), which includes making reciprocal friendships. Most gains were evidenced in the `self-negating behaviour`, subscale (r), which indicate reductions in self-demeaning and avoidance behaviours. Most negative gains were evidenced in subscale (g) `is biddable and accepts constraints`, which includes following adult instructions and working and playing cooperatively with others. Furthermore, negative differences were evidenced in subscale (t), where all 7 children regressed in `shows inconsequential behaviour`, which includes making inappropriate noises or remarks and being restless and erratic. Overall, the changes observed on the Boxall Profile scores are disappointing.

The findings from this comparison are evidenced in table 4 below green indicates no change in comparison scores, blue indicates the amount of negative difference and yellow the amount of positive difference according to teacher perceptions on the Boxall Profile.

	*Developmental strand											*Diagnostic profile									
	a	*b*	*c*	*d*	*e*	*f*	*g*	*h*	*i*	*j*		*q*	*r*	*s*	*t*	*u*	*v*	*w*	*x*	*y*	*z*
Child																					
1	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	1		-	1	-	6	3	2	-	-	2	2
2	1	-	-	-	-	3	1	5	-	-		2	2	6	5	1	7	5	2	7	3
3	6	2	3	2	2	3	5	10	1	1		8	5	4	6	-	14	2	8	7	3
4	6	4	2	3	1	4	5	8	1	1		8	8	4	7	3	11	6	7	3	2
5	2	2	2	6	2	1	2	2	2	-		2	2	3	3	3	2	-	-	2	-
6	7	2	-	2	3	5	4	10	3	1		10	-	11	8	-	8	1	7	9	5
7	1	2	-	4	-	-	1	3	-	-		1	5	8	10	4	5	3	2	3	3

Table 4: Comparisons of Boxall profile data for 7 children over a 5 month period of attending the nurture group.

Key

- ☐ = no change
- ☐ = amount of positive difference
- ☐ = amount of negative difference

Findings: Impact on whole-school practice

Findings gathered from perceptions of 24 school staff in relation to the impact of the nurture group on whole-school practice are presented below.
Findings from questions 1, 2 and 7 required staff to answer using one of the following responses, YES, NO or PARTIALLY, these responses are presented below.

Question	Choice of responses		
	YES	NO	PARTIALLY
1) Are you aware of the function/purpose of the nurture group in your school?	21	0	3
2) Are the pupils aware of the function/purpose of the nurture group in your school? **	12	0	11
7) Has there been effective liaison with the nurture group staff?	15	1	8

** One member of staff declined to answer question 2

Additional comments from staff in respect of these questions indicated that as a result of becoming more aware of the function and purpose of the nurture group, they had also become more aware of ways to support children with social and emotional difficulties in the mainstream. Staff responses also elaborated on question 2, and some staff felt that children were aware of nurture but possibly not the purpose of the group. Other comments included:

"Children see it (the nurture group) as a place to go if you're struggling"

"Only those that use the nurture group understand its function"

Staff comments on question 7 included:

"As a TA I don't really liaise with the staff"

"Verbally yes, but IEP's and paperwork needs to be more rigorous"

"There is regular liaison and information sharing with the mental well-being team"

Other questions to elicit responses on whole-school impact required staff to rate their response, by choosing a number that closely matched their belief between 1 and 10 depending on the indicator assigned to the question. The following responses were received; numbers in red underneath the scale correspond to the number of staff responses.

Question 3: How effective do you feel the nurture group is in making a positive impact on other CHILDREN in the school?

Not effective	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 extremely effective
						1	8	1	5	9

Additional comments from staff concerning this question included:
"Keeps the classrooms and playground calmer"
"There is less acting out in the classes"
"Rewards are two fold, children from the nurture group bring back good strategies and time away allows the teacher to focus on the less demanding children."

Question 4: How effective do you feel the nurture group is in making a positive impact on STAFF in the school?

Not effective	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 extremely effective
	1				2	2	2	6	2	9

Further comments from staff included:
"Makes teaching and behaviour management easier"
"Supports staff with managing and understanding behaviour of children"
"Most staff have embraced nurture and use strategies within their own practice"

"When the nurture group children are back in class they have a huge (negative) impact on the teaching and learning in the class"

Question 5: As a result of having a nurture group in the school, how much has this improved your understanding of nurturing practice?

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 a great deal
					3	1	3	3	4	10

Additional comments from staff included:
"Extended practice in my own classroom, with a quiet zone"
"Given me an insight into how essential nurture is in schools"
"Has extended the principles across the school and led to whole-school training"

Question 6: In your opinion, is the nurture group beneficial to whole-school practice?

Not worthwhile 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Extremely beneficial
				1	2	2	4	3	12

Further comments from staff included:
"The whole school has adopted a nurturing approach"
"The longer nurturing has been in the school, the more disseminated and understood it has become"
"Helps with consistent management of children and positive use of specific nurturing language"
"Only if children have full-time access, as part-time access has lowered the overall benefits"

Question 8: How effective do you feel the nurture group has been overall?

Not effective 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10extremely effective
					1	6	4	4	9

Further comments from staff included:
"It has made a big difference to children and families"
"Post nurture most children start to engage with their learning"

Staff suggestions on how to develop the nurture group in the future in response to question 9 included:

- To run a full-time classic nurture group provision
- Expand and develop the current nurture groups through more financial support
- Clinical supervision and support for nurture group staff, particularly, those who deal with the emotional stress on a daily basis
- To have a full-time teacher in each nurture group
- Larger room allocated as a nurturing facility
- More staff involvement to enable children attending the nurture group to benefit

- Resources made available to train more staff so they could become involved in the nurture group
- Sustain/develop the involvement of parents and carers in supporting the nurture group
- Closer liaison with the mainstream school, including more access
- Have monthly nurture-days to discuss and share good practice

Interpretation of main findings

Findings from staff views regarding NG influences on whole-school practice indicated that most staff know what the function and purpose of the facility is in the school. However, Staff were not so confident in determining whether this was the case for the pupils in the school. Furthermore, two thirds of staff felt that there had been effective liaison between NG staff and themselves. The majority of school staff rated the NG as being effective in making a positive impact on other children in the school, where the ranges of scores fell between 6 and 10 (out of 1 to 10), 1 implying not effective and 10 implying extremely effective. There was an entirely different spread of scores for staff's views on whether the NG had made a positive impact on them in the school. Scores ranged from 1 to 10 and most responses were 10 and one staff member responded 1 (not effective). Most staff felt that having a NG in the school had improved their understanding of nurturing practice. 10 out of 24 rated it as 10 (a great deal). 50% of staff felt the NG was extremely beneficial (10) to whole-school nurturing practice. Finally, most staff felt that the NG had been extremely effective (10/10).

Other findings from this small-scale evaluation study indicated that greater differences and improvements in meeting children's social and emotional needs were reported than those in behaviour and learning from children attending a nurture group over a 5 month period. These findings support those found by Cooper and Whitebread (2007) which suggest improvements in nurture group children's social and emotional needs occur first and improvements in behaviour and learning follow.

Findings gathered from parental responses suggest that improvements were reported in the following order: social skills, learning, emotion and the least reported improvement was in the child's behaviour, where 3 of the 5 parents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had observed any improvements since their child's inclusion to the NG. 2 of the 5 parents agreed that they had seen improvements in their child's learning since their inclusion to the NG. 1 parent reported an improvement in social and emotional improvement. However, the majority of parental responses for social and emotional improvements were scored 3 (neither agree, or disagree); implying there had been no discernable or noticeable differences in these areas. Findings also indicate that parents held a positive perception of the nurture groups overall effectiveness in meeting their child's needs; a similar finding to that found by O'Connor and Colwell (2002).

Findings gathered from pupils attending the NG signify that the NG had helped them to feel different in the following order: making friends (social), going to school, their feelings, their behaviour and least of all their learning. These findings provide evidence that children attending the NG feel a sense of belonging through making friends

(Sanders, 2007) and these social relationships help children to make an attachment to the school (Doyle, 2001 and Cooper et al, 2001).

Staff responses indicated improvements were reported in the following order: emotional (feeling safe and secure), confidence, social/behaviour and progress in learning were reported as the least improvement seen. These findings provide evidence that NGs assist children to feel emotionally safe and secure through the provision of a secure base (Boxall, 2002).

Findings from Boxall Profile data suggest since attending the NG the majority of children showed regressions on the Developmental Strands and increased difficulties on the Diagnostic Profile. Although there was some positive gains recorded that support the findings from questionnaire responses that the children attending the NG value the friendships they have made with other children in the NG. However, the regressions over the developmental strand and diagnostic profile indicate that children still found it difficult to follow adult instructions, work and play cooperatively with their peers, and showed more restless and erratic behaviour despite the predictable routine of the facility. These findings may reflect the underlying social and emotional difficulties that still exist after 5 months of attending the NG, and if so fully support the research evidence found by Cooper and Whitebread (2007) that for positive changes to be seen there is a need for long-term attendance in a NG. Furthermore, the findings may also reflect the children's reduced access to the NG facility due to the summer holidays, and the change in NG staff thus not reflecting previous findings from 'classic' Boxall models such as Cooper et al, (2001).

The findings generally are of no surprise, as NGs are an intervention designed to ameliorate social and emotional difficulties, and participants in this study reported greater differences/improvements in social and emotional domains as a result of children attending the NG. These findings therefore support those documented in literature (Sanders, 2007) and (Boorn et al, 2010) and also provides reassurance to the school staff that favourable differences or improvements have been noticed in meeting individual needs.

The findings gathered from the questionnaires were also verified from inferences made during observations I conducted over 5 separate visits to the facility. These observations were used to triangulate findings from the questionnaires by looking at the NG staff practice during adult to child interactions. From these observations I witnessed staff modelling positive social interaction to the children. It was abundantly clear that the children's social and emotional needs were of paramount importance and key principles of the `classic' model were acted out. I observed lots of labelled praise, positive discourse that communicated to the child they were valued individually, proximity praise, rewarding positive choices, empathy, and an emphasis on improving and enhancing speaking and listening skills. From my observations, I got the impression that meeting the social and emotional needs of the children were seen and treated as priority by the NG staff in preference for meeting behavioural and learning needs.

Furthermore, in all of my 5 visits to the NG I did not witness any curriculum-based learning. There was a great deal of singing, cooking, playing games and opportunities

for reciprocal interaction. The omission of this formal learning may be reflected in the findings of this evaluation from children and school staff perspectives, which suggested that learning was the least improved domain. Notwithstanding most children attending this NG were not developmentally ready to access formal education as indicated by their Boxall Profile scores.

Parents reported the least improvements were in their child's behaviour. Furthermore, it was reported by the NG teacher that parents do not receive regular feedback on their children's progress. Evidence suggests (Binnie and Allen, 2008); a useful method of liaising with parents is through the introduction of a `drop in' forum, to enable staff to share progress and strategies that work with parents/carers to help them improve both parenting skills and their child's behaviour at home.

Children attending the NG reported the most differences in making friends and coming to school. Furthermore, the NG teacher confirmed that she had witnessed improvements in most NG children's school attendance since their inclusion to the group. The NG appeared to provide a secure attachment and in doing so has enabled the children to form an attachment to their education (Gilligan, 1998). This attachment was reinforced through making friendships with other children in the NG and in the mainstream classroom.

Furthermore, it can be said that the NG in this study provides a facilitative role in helping the children to become emotionally contained (Bion, 1967). Through empathetic and affectionate NG practice the staff recognised and understood the children's emotional difficulties and returned them in a way the child found manageable freeing up energy to help NG children build social relationships. The term `containment` originates from Bion (1967) and refers to the process of helping an individual control their feelings of anxiety, so that they do not feel overwhelmed and therefore have the capacity for emotional growth and genuine learning, McLoughlin (2010). School staff reported least improvements in behaviour and learning. Therefore clearer and more consistent liaison between mainstream and NG staff is needed. This could include regular open days in the NG to share good theory and practice of NGs in dealing with SEB difficulties and tackling behaviour difficulties to improve behaviour in the classrooms. The mainstream staff sharing information on curriculum planning with NG staff could strengthen the development of a collaborative and supportive approach.

Recommendations for future practice

In order to ensure the continued success of the nurture group provision, and assist with its longevity, the following recommendations may be useful to consider:

A major need for development highlighted by this study was for more consistent and accurate monitoring and evaluation of meeting the needs of children placed in the NG. For instance, the NGs only current method of monitoring and evaluating NG children's progress is through the Boxall Profile. If these were taken as the `gold standard' of monitoring progress, as they are in most NGs; then the data from this study would suggest that the NG was not meeting the children's SEB needs. Therefore, further improvements in monitoring could include the regular collection of quotes from staff,

children and parents on what is going well and what needs improving, and the completion of evaluation questionnaires from children, their parents and mainstream staff to feed into the planning cycle.

Furthermore, from this study the following changes to the current NG practice would be recommended to the school:

- A greater emphasis on developing curriculum based learning in the NG, so children attending the NG and being removed from their classes are not falling further behind academically
- To develop monitoring systems for the other NG's in the school that were not included in this evaluation
- Develop an in-house NG steering group and ensure there is both parental and pupil involvement
- In order to promote the excellent work, which occurs within the nurture group setting, it is vital that others outside of the group are kept informed. One way of doing this is to hold open days/mornings/evenings for parents, staff and pupils. This allows the group to be showcased, and also provides the chance to explain in more detail the function and purpose of the group, which can easily be overlooked or only loosely understood by those not directly involved. Understanding the purpose more fully may assist in greater support of the group by others.
- Ensure there are specific targets to focus on improving NG practice, data from the Boxall Profile indicates a need to focus on developing listening skills, so children follow adult instructions, and social skills, so children can develop their skills in cooperative and reciprocal play.
- Promote clearer and more consistent reciprocal liaison between nurture group and mainstream primary school to share good practice between each environment
- In order to maximise the success of the nurture group, it is important that parents of participating young people are involved with the process. It is also necessary for parents to receive regular feedback on pupil progress, and half termly reports/staff comments may be a useful means of achieving this. Pupil certificates for progress and/or good effort could also be sent home, including information for parents regarding the activity undertaken. Finally, time for parents to meet with nurture group staff would be helpful, perhaps on a half-termly basis. This would allow for concerns to be discussed, and suggestions and recommendations made on a reciprocal basis. For instance, parents could discuss with staff issues to consider in their practice, and staff could provide ideas for parents in assisting the reinforcement of nurture group principles in the home setting.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings from this evaluation provide evidence that nurture groups are beneficial in providing support to remove social and emotional barriers to learning and a facility that promotes a sense of belonging and emotional security at an individual level. However, there is more contention over the findings in this study that relate to whole-school practice. Overall, it is difficult to suggest that the nurture group in this study made a unique difference to the whole-school nurturing practice as its impact as an intervention was diluted by other forms of nurturing practice that co-existed within, and dissipated throughout the school ethos. This included the ongoing creative-curriculum,

where authentic learning enabled nurture to 'naturally' occur, and other nurturing interventions that formed the bedrock to the school ethos, such as Theraplay (Booth and Jernberg, 2010).

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements, thanks and appreciation are expressed to the staff at Rollright Primary School for spending the time to reflect on and share the nurturing practice that occurs in their school. Further thanks are expressed to all parents/carers for their valuable input and to the children attending the key stage 1 nurture group for sharing their fantastic stories and company with me. Special thanks and appreciation goes to the Head Teacher, Janet Harris of Rollright Primary School for accommodating and making me feel welcome in her school. Finally I would like to acknowledge and give special thanks and appreciation to Danielle James, nurture group teacher, for allowing me to become part of the nurture group and for sharing some truly excellent nurturing practice.

Questionnaires used within this study are available on request to Will Cross, Doctoral Trainee EP. Cosby Educational Psychology Service. June 2011

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