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Student behaviour, motivation and the potential of attachment aware schools to re-define the landscape

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ABSTRACT

This article is a position paper drawing on the findings of several studies into attachment-aware approaches in schools and other settings. In seeking to promote pedagogical positions that place greater emphasis on the emotional landscape of students, the authors locate this in an historical perspective. They outline the ways in which educationalists have come to separate the *learning* being from the *feeling* being, to the extent of evolving separate discourses on behaviour and wellbeing.

On the contrary, the authors contend that these elements are intertwined, a reality that needs to be understood at policy level for 'outcomes' to change radically. They frame their argument in the light of conclusions drawn from studies in which they were involved of attachment awareness and emotion coaching approaches (2011-17). The authors' position is further informed by research exploring attitudes of excluded youngsters towards education (2015-6), and also in the light of wider international literature around progressive education.

Keywords: Attachment, exclusion, educational engagement, behaviour, emotions, wellbeing, progressive education

> *'We need a system that aims to prepare pupils to solve hard problems in calculus or be a poet or engineer – a system freed from the grip of those who bleat bogus pop psychology about 'self image', which is an excuse for not teaching poor children how to add up.'* DfE press statement, quoted in The Guardian (Sept. 2013)

> *'School makes you feel worthless. Here you realize getting an E is not a Disappointment.'* Katie, quoted in Levinson & Thompson (2016)

Introduction

In *Experience and Education* John Dewey identified tensions between *traditional* and *progressive* education. He categorised the former as the transmission of *bodies of information and skills*, along with training *conformity in rules and standards* (Dewey, 1997:17). For

pupils to be successful within that framework, they needed to be conditioned into *docility, receptivity and obedience* (Ibid: 18). Dewey contrasted this with progressive education, which placed emphasis on *expression, individuality and learning through experience* (Ibid: 20). Although Dewey argued against simple oppositions, it remains difficult to incorporate the precepts of Dewey's *progressive* education within a mainstream framework. There are historical reasons for this, but also perhaps, inherent dissonance between the principles underlying both. Biesta (2010) suggests that such a dichotomous view hampers our ability to engage effectively in rational discussion about the purposes of education, or indeed its implications for the individual and society.

In our view, unresolved tensions between these positions continue to hinder the development of an enlightened pedagogical philosophy that is in the interests of both learners and teachers. This can be illustrated in the apparent contradictions in Conservative Party policy positions concerning behaviour and children's mental health. Although a 2016 policy paper drew attention to potential links between behaviour and mental health, and the need to provide a supportive school environment (DfE, 2016a), this still tended towards a deficit model, where schools were expected to identify and 'cure' those pupils who were most at risk. Positive approaches to promoting good mental health were limited to classroom-based PSHE strategies, as advocated in the 2015 'Future in Mind' report (DoH, 2015). The subsequent statutory guidance (DfE, 2017) merely repeated a document first issued in 2015, focussing almost exclusively on punitive measures which could be taken against parents for their children's misbehaviour.

Tom Bennett's report, 'Creating a Culture: How school leaders can optimise better behaviour', published by the DfE in April 2017 (Bennett, 2017), connects 'behaviour' to outcomes in a reductive way, with no reference to any emotional hinterland that might shape a child's behaviour. The word 'behaviour' is mentioned 389 times in the report; the word 'curriculum' appears three times; there are no incidences of the words 'feelings' or 'emotion'. While the word 'engagement' appears three times, there is no discussion whatsoever as to why some children become disaffected or 'disengaged'. The Secretary of State, Justine Greening's, covering letter made one single reference to concurrent discussions on children's mental health in schools (DfE, 2017c), yet by December 2017 these became the focus of a major Green Paper Consultation, (DoH/DfE, 2017: 26). However this latter document has itself been widely criticised as promoting a limited and medicalised model of mental illness (See ARC, 2018), which like the Bennett report implicitly divides children into the conformist 'well/can cope' sheep and nonconformist 'sick/needs specialist support' goats.

Moreover, this dichotomy can be seen as reflecting an exclusively cognitive, or over-intellectualised view of education (Riley, 2013). We argue that there is a need to consider affective, or feeling, aspects, and how they affect the educational process, not simply for children and young people, but for teachers and other adults involved. Riley (2013) suggests that the emotional disposition and attachment needs of the teacher can play an important role in classroom relationships and behaviour, while Taggart (forthcoming) indicates the role that different attachment styles can play in teacher and leadership resilience. Sheikh & Bagley (2018) suggest that this dimension affects not only everyday classroom interactions, but is a key element of the policy enactment process.

This article proposes an alternative approach to that suggested by Bennett (Bennett, 2017) in facilitating better engagement in schools for students who are at risk of being alienated. Rather than focusing on issues such as *behaviour* and *control*, we would contend that it is of far greater importance to put in place mechanisms through which better *engagement* can be achieved. This approach, significantly, appears to be endorsed by the systematic review of evidence by the National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health and University College London reported in the Mental Health Green Paper (DoH/DfE, 2017 – Appendix A; Evidence Review). This suggested that the effects of many programmes, including Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning – SEAL (DCSF, 2007), are limited, but concluded that whole school, flexible and compatible approaches, supported by staff training and monitoring of outcomes, were more likely to be successful.

> *'Engagement from children and young people is likely to increase if interventions are accessible, personalised and flexible, graduated, non-stigmatising, age appropriate, context-appropriate and culturally-appropriate.'* (DoH/DfE 2017:39)

An important area in this discussion is the use of language, particularly around the notion of wellbeing. Spratt (2016) drawing on earlier work by Ereaut & Whiting (2008) indicates the confused use of the term, which can be written in three different ways – well being, well-being and wellbeing – and can have at least four different meanings (see below). The Green Paper on Children and Young People's Mental Health (DoH/DfE, 2017) appears to use 'mental health' to refer to specific diagnosable medical conditions, while the formula 'mental health and wellbeing' is used in more general discussions. The implications of these different usages are explored later in this paper.

One area, which has been developing over the past five years, and which may assist teachers in resolving these issues, is the concept of attachment awareness in schools. Unlike initiatives such as SEAL or PSHE (see below), attachment aware schools are less about a programme than a disposition towards education. The notion derives from John Bowlby's work on attachment in the 1960's (see Holmes 2014), which has been highly influential in areas such as social care and health. Since the early 2000's there has been a growing literature relating this to schools, for example, in the work of Cairns (Cairns & Stanway, 2004, Cairns, 2006), Geddes (2006) and Bomber (2007), Bomber & Hughes (2013). These all derive from essentially psycho-therapeutic and social care models. In more practical terms Wetz (2009), as a retiring secondary school headteacher, called for greater awareness of attachment issues in secondary schools and in initial teacher training (Wetz 2010). Timpson (2016) describes the way in which, as chair of governors, he used his company's attachment-based approaches to transform a local primary school. The Green Paper on Mental Health makes specific reference to the 2016 Core Framework for Initial Teacher Training (DfE 2016d): '*placing an emphasis on the importance of emotional development, such as attachment issues and mental health, on pupils' performance*' (DoH/DfE, 2017: 27).

The attachment approach is attractive for a number of reasons. It provides a universal whole school strategy, which does not stigmatise individual disadvantaged groups, but enables individual needs to be met. Bergin & Bergin (2009) in the USA suggest that in any classroom around one third of children have an insecure attachment with at least one care giver and O'Connor & Russell (2004) in Scotland that 98% have experienced some form of traumatic event, one in four of which have led to severe emotional or behavioural disturbance. Stewart-Parker (2014), in her description of attachment aware approaches in a top set year 8 class in a West Midlands social housing area, demonstrated that, of 29 students, many of whom had been identified as gifted and talented, seven were on support plans or in care.

A key emphasis in the attachment awareness developments at Bath Spa University has been their congruity with other school programmes. Unlike SEAL, PSHE, or other essentially taught programmes, the attachment awareness/emotion coaching programmes are presented as a 'tool in the toolkit' which could be used alongside wider school behaviour strategies or other developmental programmes such as Thrive, Theraplay or nurture groups (Rose et al, 2014). While we believe that there are strong arguments in favour of the attachment aware schools approach, we acknowledge that this is a contested area, which is discussed below. We do not feel that it is possible to address the issues without some review of the historical

context, by which a divergence occurred in understandings of the ways in which children's learning should be managed, and by which learning became detached from feelings about education.

Historical overview

In considering a divergence between two contrasting philosophical positions to education, it is possible to identify ideas from Classical times. For instance, it has been argued (Barrow, 1975) that a view of utilitarianism in education is evident in the work of Plato. Others (cf. Aloni, 2008; Curren, 2013; Spratt, 2016) have found connections in Aristotle's view of 'eudaimonism', or 'flourishing' to more child-centred approaches, based on notions such as justice, development of character and wellbeing. While it would be fascinating to trace the development of such positions across time and place, that is beyond the purposes of this discussion. Instead, we will restrict ourselves to a brief overview of policy developments in the UK, with particular reference to key historical moments that seem pertinent to this discussion.

Since the beginning of mass education in the UK there has been a perceived tension between the utilitarian approaches typified by the Lancaster and Bell training schools (Iwashita, 2017) and the more liberal philosophies articulated by Matthew Arnold and associates such as Thomas Hughes (Arnold, 2009). In the latter part of the twentieth century the Black Papers (1969, 1975 and 1977) attacked 'progressive teaching methods' and a lack of discipline in schools, drawing an explicit connection between 'progressive education' in primary schools, 'student unrest', and 'other unwelcome tendencies or phenomena' (Galton et al 1980:41). The tensions here between the pupil-centred ethos of the Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council for Education 1967) and the ideology of the authors of the Black Papers (1969-77) seem unresolved to this day, separating (externally-imposed) behaviour codes from (internally-driven) engagement issues.

It is tempting to suggest that this traditional/progressive dichotomy is reflected in political party policies but, as Bailey & Ball (2016) indicate, the reality is much more complicated. It was under the Thatcher Conservative government that the Education Act (1981) and the Children Act (1989) were passed, creating new frameworks and rights for children with special educational needs, and those in care. The Elton Report (DES, 1989) on discipline in school, far from supporting the moral panics that had given rise to the Inquiry, reassured the public and gave a very pragmatic – and pupil centred – basis for future development. Similarly, while in terms of children's services the rhetoric and approach of

New Labour appeared to be more child centred – highlighted in the Every Child Matters agenda (HM Treasury 2003) and the Children Act (2004) - Ereaut & Whiting (2008), in a report commissioned by the Department for Schools, Children and Families, indicated the wide range of competing definitions of children's wellbeing, and their inconsistency of use within and beyond Whitehall. Indeed, the punitive interventions towards parents in the 2017 statutory guidance cited above were based on the New Labour Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 (DfE, 2017b).

Nonetheless, there was a perception in certain areas that the limited 'progressive' agenda adopted by New Labour was dangerous. Ecclestone & Hayes in 'The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education' (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009) argued that the government agenda of promoting emotional literacy and well-being – highlighted in the introduction of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme (DCSF, 2007) - was undermining the pursuit of knowledge in schools and colleges, creating a dependence on 'therapies' derived from popular culture rather than any sound theoretical framework, thereby alienating teachers and parents. Similarly the somewhat measured and pragmatic approaches to managing behaviour outlined in the Steer Reports (DfES, 2005; DCSF, 2009) were later decried by Conservative government experts such as Bennett (Bennett, 2017).

Bailey & Ball (2016) suggest that the approaches adopted by successive UK governments since the passage of the Education Reform Act in 1988 have reflected a pattern of continuity and incremental change within an essentially neoliberal policy framework (see also Simon & Ward, 2010). However, while the New Labour project sought to use such approaches as levers to implement specific socio-democratic measures (Giddens, 1998; Bailey & Ball, 2016), the Coalition and successive Conservative governments led to a much narrower focus on educational outcomes, punitive interventions in 'troubled' families, an emphasis on moral decline, individual responsibility and 'character education':

> *'The push and pull to 'upskill' the disadvantaged student through academic rigour and tougher examinations is now being coupled with an ethico-disciplinary policy that aims to impart character and behaviour traits that will supposedly enable them to 'thrive in modern Britain''.* (Bailey & Ball, 2016:143)

It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the rhetoric of the Coalition government at an early stage focussed on discipline in schools.

'Raising the status of teaching also requires a significant strengthening of teachers' authority in the classroom. We know that among undergraduates considering teaching, fear of bad behaviour and violence is the most common reason for choosing an alternative career. The measures contained in this White Paper to boost teachers' and head teachers' authority – including new powers on detentions and searching – will have a powerful impact.' DfE, 2010:3)

As Bailey & Ball (2016) indicate, this fitted well with the overall Conservative narrative of 'Broken Britain', as well as with the neo-conservative model of prescriptive interventions delivered by 'practical' teachers, trained via Charlie Taylor's Checklist (DfE, 2011). DfE guidance to schools (DfE, 2016a) focussed on teachers' rights to apply sanctions, while civil servants appeared genuinely bemused when headteachers mentioned relationships as a feature of classroom behaviour (see Parker et al, 2016). Moreover, a new emphasis emerged on 'Alternative Provision' (DfE, 2012), effectively separating off those children and young people unable or unwilling to conform to the new 'character' requirements, rather than seeking their re-integration into mainstream schools. Significantly, this remained a feature of the 2017 Bennett report, and was highlighted in the Secretary of State's response (DfE, 2017c).

By contrast, parts of the DfE and other government departments were pressing for more effective joined up working – see for example the Home Office Report on Information Sharing (Home Office, 2014) - increased rights for children in care and those with SEND (Children and Families Act, 2014) - and growing demand for support for children's mental health. In January 2015 the Government response to the Health Committee call for mandatory teacher training on mental health was an outright denial that this should form part of government policy, referring this back to individual schools and training organisations (Health Committee, 2015). However by December 2017 the Green Paper 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision' made specific commitments to providing such training' (DoH/DfE, 2017). It may be interesting to consider whether this ambivalence on the part of the DfE reflects a tension between the neoliberal laissez faire market approach and the neoconservative interventionist approaches as described by Bailey & Ball (2016), or illustrates the inconsistent '*cluster of different reframings of public and social policy'* which Ecclestone suggests characterise current neoliberal approaches (Ecclestone, 2017:59). Indeed, even this latest Green Paper is challenged as having a limited and excessively medical model of children's needs:

'There is strong epidemiological evidence for links between income inequality and mental ill-health such as borderline personality, teenage pregnancy and delinquency. Schools in deprived areas, with high rates of children eligible for free school meals, social housing and lone parent families have higher rates of child mental health, and worse provision than the better off districts. Thanks to austerity policies this discrepancy is widening. But little of this is heard in political or public mental health discourse.' (Holmes & Parker, 2018:1)

'The green paper also makes little recognition of the wide inequalities in children's mental health. At age 11, children from the poorest 20% 0f households are four times more likely to have a serious mental health difficulty as those in the wealthiest 20%' Centre for Mental Health evidence quoted in the joint Education and Health and Social Care Committees Report (2018:9)

Philosophy, policy and classroom practice

The issue however is as to how far these general approaches impact on classroom practice and pupils' experience of education. It is dangerous to assume a homogenous fit between the traditional v. progressive paradigms and party policy-making, while ignoring the complexity of power relationships and human interactions which lie between stated policy positions and everyday classroom practice. Sheikh & Bagley (2018) draw a distinction between 'imperative' and 'exhortative' policy making, while indicating the complex mixture of teacher affective responses to issues internal and external to the school. The specific requirements of the Literacy Strategy (National Archives, 2011) or the new National Curriculum (DfE, 2014) are in stark contrast to the vague exhortations around Every Child Matters (HM Treasury, 2003) or the new SEND regulations (DfE, 2015a).

Trowman (2008) demonstrates the potential agency of classroom teachers in implementing policies in their own way, so as to make them meaningful for their particular group of pupils. Similarly it might be argued that the more laissez faire teaching of the 1990s was potentially better attuned to pupil needs than the pressured delivery foci post 2000, or even that academy 'freedoms' might make it easier to support more flexible approaches. Further, the development of SEAL (DCSF 2007) within a highly prescriptive curriculum approach might be seen as an add-on to the real business of education, and not internalised by the schools and teachers concerned. This view is supported by the research evidence quoted

in the recent Green Paper (DoH/DfE, 2017).We have seen very little evidence of continuing SEAL lessons or practice in schools, although a number of teachers refer anecdotally to the approach as a positive past experience (e.g. Greenhill, 2018). In this latter context the teacher in question was referring back to SEAL to divert the researcher's attention from the lack of counselling provision in her school

Further, as indicated above, the notion of wellbeing, which underlies much 'progressive' thinking on education, is itself problematic. It would be hard to argue that all 'traditional' approaches are antithetic to children's wellbeing, even if there are differences in emphasis and approach, while, as we have seen, there was a lack of consistency even under the 'Every Child Matters' agenda (Ereaut & Whiting, 2008). Jennifer Spratt (2016) offers a helpful typology of discourses in her exploration of wellbeing in Scottish educational policy. The development of children's policy in Scotland has diverged considerably from English models, particularly since 2010. The Scottish Government has since 2008 had a focus on relationships at the core of its policy on behaviour and has (in theory at least) not been restricted to seeing discipline as synonymous with control (Scottish Government 2008). Indeed, in 2012 it explicitly adopted an attachment based perspective for the entire children's workforce, including teachers (Furnival et al 2012, Scottish Government 2012a). Nonetheless, we would argue that Spratt's analysis is equally applicable to other UK administrations.

Taking the Scottish 'Curriculum for Excellence' (Scottish Executive, 2004) and Getting it right for every child - 'Girfec' - programmes (Scottish Government 2008 and 2012b) Spratt draws on Ereaut & Whiting (2008) to suggest that there are potentially four themes (Spratt 2016 p225) which are implicit in discussions of wellbeing, although she emphasises that these are not mutually exclusive and several themes can be present within any particular approach. The four themes are:

Theme 1: Discourse of physical health promotion, emerging from medicine

Theme 2: Discourse of social and emotional literacy, emerging from psychology

Theme 3: Discourse of care, emerging from the field of social care

Theme 4: Discourse of flourishing, emerging from philosophy

Spratt suggests that, in fact, the models that derive from the first two themes are essentially normative, implying an individual responsibility to maintain a specific gendered body shape and health, and to follow behaviours that are seen as acceptable, rather than

developing relationships. This latter might be linked with the discussion of citizenship and character education above. 'Care' as a concept is more problematic. The Scottish government documentation considered by Spratt emphasises a holistic view of the 'whole child', the roles and responsibilities of adults involved and the child's rights to participation. However, Spratt quotes Hendrick's (2003) and Cockburn's (2011) views on the normalising role and power relationships inherent in social care relationships, suggesting that these can only be balanced where there is a truly 'dialogic encounter' between child and carers (Noddings, 2005). This again might reflect the difficulties experienced in fully implementing the ECM agenda.

The fourth theme, of 'flourishing' – linked with Aristotle's concept of eudaimonism - is seen as particularly relevant to the educational context. Spratt proposes that, in the Scottish Government documentation, health and wellbeing are seen as a prerequisite for learning, rather than an outcome of education. The notion of fulfilment in learning, relationships and participation in wider society is absent. By contrast, while they accepted the need for basic psychological and physical wellbeing to enable children to access education, the teachers in her interview sample saw good learning experiences as enhancing children's lives and relationships. This also reflects Troman's (2008) findings.

Background to this paper: attachment awareness versus marginalisation

We feel it to be important for the reader to have a clear sense of our own backgrounds that have led us towards the positions taken in this paper. Having worked for many years in local government, education and Higher Education, Author 1 was an instigator of a number of action research projects in emotion coaching, supporting vulnerable children and attachment aware schools (see Digby et al, 2017; Parker, 2012; Parker & Gorman, 2013; Rose et al, 2015; Rose et al, 2016a; Rose et al, 2016b; Rose et al, 2016c).

For over two decades Author 2 has been researching educational engagement / disengagement amongst youngsters from marginalised communities. Key focus across these studies has been exploring underlying reasons for lack of engagement with education – (see e.g. Levinson 2007; 2014; 2016). Of particular salience for the purposes of this discussion were two research projects, one involving two GRT (Gypsy/Roma/Traveller) communities in the South West of England (2010-2012), and the other in a PRU (Pupil Referral Unit) (2012-15). This PRU was also in the South West of England, and had been set up for excluded students and those with medical (emotional and physical issues). Both projects entailed extensive ethnographic work, including interviews with youngsters, teachers and fieldworkers, as well as observation. Across these contexts persistent and salient findings

were that: 1. For several reasons the youngsters involved often felt disenfranchised from their school communities; 2. They often saw no clear connection between school learning and future employment outcomes for themselves; 3. Both the GRT youngsters and those from other backgrounds had often sought actively to get themselves excluded from mainstream settings.

In considering these issues there is an implicit tension between the notion of the attachment aware school as providing a universal context which can support its community because it addresses those wider issues of emotional and mental wellbeing for all of its individual members, and the need to address the particular issues raised by individual students who are not engaged with it. In some ways this is a false dichotomy; the attachment aware schools approach is not presented as a universal panacea, and training materials are quite explicit about the need to seek specialist support where appropriate (Rose et al, 2014). Conversely many of those writing about disaffection (e.g. Wetz, 2009, Levinson & Thompson, 2016) make specific reference to the need for attachment informed approaches in supporting those young people who are most at risk.

Attachment Aware Schools

The Attachment Aware Schools programme came from three main sources. Since 2010 researchers from the Centre for Education Policy in Practice at Bath Spa University had been exploring the 'emotion coaching' model put forward by Professor John Gottman in the USA (Gottman, 1997), for use by teachers in schools, early years and a range of other professions. Gottman's work originated as an observation of parenting approaches and is related principally to the 'emotional intelligence' discussion of the 1980's and 1990's (see Goleman, 1997). It has been mainly developed as a parenting tool (see Havighurst et al, 2010) although its use by Bath Spa in the classroom context has been strongly endorsed by Gottman himself (Gottman, 2012). Using an action research model, the team worked with a group of schools and other organisations in two Wiltshire Community Areas in 2011 and 2012 to develop and evaluate the approach (Rose et al 2015). Between January 2015 and March 2017 the team also worked with Somerset Public Health in training over 160 professionals to act as champions for children's mental health, using the emotion coaching approach - see Digby et al (2017), Rose et al (2016c).

As a parallel development, in early 2011, the Centre began to develop 'In Care, In School' (ICIS), in conjunction with Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) local authority, working with a group of young people in care and care leavers to produce materials to raise

awareness of the barriers and issues which they faced in schools (Bath Spa University, 2012). The ICIS project group found that schools typically had two responses: '*OK, we get it but what can we do about it?*' - or '*what about the other 29*?' Although the materials were intended for classroom use, researchers found that the role of the teacher was crucial, and simply including the lessons as part of a PSHE or pastoral curriculum was self-defeating. Teachers lacked the knowledge or confidence to deliver them effectively and, while pupils could often articulate their learning from the programme, this was not necessarily sustained through other areas of the school pastoral and academic curriculum (Parker & Gorman, 2013).

At the same time Early Years consultants in B&NES local authority were expressing concerns about the number of reception-aged children who were being referred for behaviour difficulties when the main presenting problem was an attachment need (see Geddes, 2006; Holmes, 2014). An external consultancy had been commissioned to provide training for a small number of identified schools, but this was unsustainable, both in financial terms, and – as with In Care, In School – in providing an ongoing support framework for whole school development. The Emotion Coaching action research model adopted by the Attachment Aware Schools programme provided both a framework for supporting whole school development, and some practical strategies that teachers and other professionals could use in the classroom (Rose et al, 2016a). Later programmes were also developed with Stoke on Trent, Dudley and Leicestershire.

While there does appear to be significant evidence for the impact of attachment aware school approaches both on outcomes for individual children and families, and on the practice of those adult professionals involved (Dingwall & Sebba, 2017), there are a number of legitimate concerns which might be raised. The first is with regard to the origins of attachment theory as an individual psychotherapeutic model, and its association with individual disadvantage. While the concept of attachment might be presented as value neutral or indeed essentially progressive, it derives from a particular historical and theoretical context (Holmes 2014). Holmes describes how John Bowlby's personal experience of distant parenting and loss came together with the Freudian and post Freudian traditions of Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy to create a new orthodoxy around attachment. While the values and practice of psychotherapy as it emerged might also be seen as espousing a more progressive, person-centred and less judgmental approach, the medicalisation of psychotherapy, and particularly the concept of attachment 'disorder', might be seen as

creating a new normalised approach. Returning to Spratt's categories of wellbeing, there is a danger that psychoanalytic and counselling approaches themselves imply a deficit model.

Secondly, a number of therapists (e.g. Golding, 2013, Bomber, 2013) have criticised the Bath Spa strategy, which is based on a universal approach for all children, as inappropriate for children suffering from severe trauma. The argument has been that a universal approach does not offer sufficient safeguards for either children or staff members. However – referring to the critique of the medicalised model outlined above (ARC 2018) - we would argue that the universal model itself implies effective referral mechanisms for individual children and staff supervision (Parker et al, 2016). Our practical experience of a number of projects is that, far from reinforcing exclusion, all children thrive under such approaches (see Parker 2012)

A more cogent critique is provided by Smith et al (2017). They argue that simplistic assumptions about attachment have been over-dominant in social work theory, with a 'pick and mix' approach to neuroscience and a 'biologising' of issues. In particular they suggest that this has led to uncritical acceptance of traditional views of family structures and an emphasis on individual attachment disorders. By contrast with this *'singular focus on dyadic, familial and essentialised relationships'*(Smith et al, 2017:1614) they propose an approach based on Honneth's (1995) three spheres of recognition – emotion, legal rights as a human being and esteem/respect as a member of a community. Interestingly this analysis also chimes with the critique of the individualised medical model and, we would argue, supports the universal attachment aware schools model. The attachment aware schools model recognises emotions as a key feature of human relationships, the rights, integrity and voice of every member of the school community and the need to deal with every individual with respect. Moreover the model specifically rejects the deficit/medical approach and its associated diagnosis of 'disorder'.

Another potential challenge is in the potential relationship between attachment and emotion awareness programmes and the wider 'emotionalisation' of society and business leadership in a neoliberal economy. This discourse first emerged as a critique of SEAL and associated emotion-based approaches – see Craig (2007) and Ecclestone & Hayes (2009). Bialostock & Aronson (2016) argue that an over-emphasis on emotions and emotional responses in the classroom socialises children into 'appropriate' emotional behaviours in the workplace, thereby reinforcing the entrepreneurial skills required under late capitalism and the knowledge economy, and reducing potential challenge to it. A similar point is made by Ecclestone & Lewis (2014) in their analysis of programmes which purport to 'teach'

resilience, but which they suggest are based on normative assumptions about the individual which marginalise social and welfare responses. Thus, in Dewey's terms, an apparently progressive approach has the unforeseen consequence of promoting docility (Dewey, 1997). Furedi (2014) questions the notion of 'interventions' based on quasi-scientific approaches as implying a deficit, medicalised model, while Ecclestone (2017) specifically includes attachment-based approaches as an example of 'generalised vulnerability' which she argues undermines individual agency in a neoliberal society. She views these as updated versions of radical notions of empowerment and self-help, characterised by Newman (2012) as 'liberatory' approaches, which were once powerful critiques of neoliberal governance, but which have now been subverted to support it (Ecclestone 2017).

A common thread to many of these latter critiques is the confusion of classroom-based teaching with overall school ethos – a distinction which we have already made in our discussion of SEAL – and an assumption, which we would challenge, that attachment and emotion based approaches are already prevalent in most classrooms. Indeed, as we have attempted to demonstrate, the majority of English government policy approaches have tended much more towards a traditional normative and performative approach. While it is beyond the scope of this paper, the issue as to whether the concept of attachment aware schools has itself been appropriated as a soft form of social control, in Foucault's sense, within a neoliberal political economy (see Perryman et al 2017), deserves further investigation.

Perceptions of 'failure' and solutions that lead to further marginalisation
As stated above, the arguments here are also informed by research with marginalised youngsters who had been moved to a PRU. These students had been identified as 'disruptive' in their previous institutions, typically being moved from one school to another before arriving in the PRU. PRUs themselves provide an interesting case study of changes in government policy over the past 30 years. The notion of the 'disruptive child' became more widespread during the 1970s, alongside forms of alternative provision consisting mainly of offsite units such as 'support centres' and 'disruptive units' (Menzies & Baars, 2015), with concerns about such centres resulting in the introduction of Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in England and Wales in the 1990s. The units first gained formal recognition in the Education Act (1993), as a rationalisation of existing disparate local authority arrangements for excluded pupils, and were perceived in the Steer reports (DfES, 2005; DCSF, 2009) as a central feature of behaviour support arrangements. However Ofsted (2007) drew attention to the variable quality of support available, and the DCSF White Paper 'Back on Track' the

following year (DCSF 2008) proposed the creation of a market involving other 'alternative provision'.

With the advent of the Coalition/Conservative governments post 2010, the idea of a market for alternative provision gained ground. In 2012, following a further Ofsted survey (Ofsted 2011) and the Taylor Report (DfE, 2012), PRUs had been removed from the direct control of local authorities and given independent budgets. As with mainstream schools, any future PRU provision had to be as a free school or academy. The White Paper Educational Excellence Everywhere (DfE, 2016), the Bennett Report (Bennett, 2017), the Secretary of State's response (DfE, 2017) and recent policy papers on alternative provision (DfE, 2018) all make reference to new requirements on schools to retain responsibility for securing alternative provision for permanently excluded pupils.

While the New Labour approach to alternative provision had focussed on appropriate activities tailored to the specific needs of particular children, the Conservative approach has been radically different. In May 2015 the UK Department for Education (DfE, 2015b) published the outcome of a review of the AP (Alternative Provision) sector commissioned in 2012 by Michael Gove (then Secretary of State for Education). The paper began as follows:

> *Large numbers of pupils in alternative provision (AP) do not achieve meaningful qualifications: in the year 2011 to 2012, only 1.3% of pupils in AP achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grade A* to C, or equivalent, including English and mathematics. We believe we need to give providers of education outside mainstream schooling more control over their staffing, curriculum and budget to make sure that these children receive the same quality of education as pupils in mainstream schools.* (DfE, 2015b: n.p.)

The paper seemed somewhat disingenuous, as the statistics often involved youngsters who had been moved out of mainstream settings in time for their *failure* to be counted on some other institution's statistics. Apart from providing justification for out-sourcing of the sector through highlighting the apparent failure of PRUs, the paper also signalled a change in direction. The shift from an emphasis on vocational training in the PRUs towards academic qualifications radically changes their purpose from being alternative to being part of the mainstream system. No longer is the intention to provide different types of environments for students who struggle to fit into mainstream settings; the purpose becomes to replicate the activity in those mainstream settings as far as possible and to prepare those who can be re-

socialised for re-integration. Without any reference to adapting school systems to accommodate such students (Hart, 2013), in effect, this swings back to a child deficit model.

If one is to assume that such policy changes leading to amended pedagogical practice are not ideologically driven, or even the whim of a Secretary of State, it does not seem unreasonable to expect clear articulation of reasoning for change. In the foreword to DfE (2018), Damian Hinds, the Secretary of State for Education, alludes to the creation of a 'strong evidence base' to inform decision making:

> *Our vision is to ensure that all AP [Alternative Provision] settings provide high quality education and that the routes into and out of AP settings work in the best interests of children. We will do this by working collaboratively with partners across the education sector to build a strong evidence base and deliver reforms that enable mainstream and special schools to support children to remain and reintegrate into their settings, promote collective responsibility for delivering a high quality education in AP and ensuring young people leaving AP have choices about what they do next.* (DfE 2018:3)

There is a growing body of recent empirical evidence emphasizing the central importance of relationships in creating successful environments for excluded youngsters and reconstructing orientations towards education (see e.g. Gutherson et al, 2011; Hart, 2013; Lawrence, 2011; Levinson & Thompson, 2016; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Pirrie et al, 2011). There is further evidence that for BESD (Behavioural, Educational and Social Difficulties) students efforts at reintegration in mainstream settings are often ill thought-out and ineffective (Pillay et al, 2013), omitting resilience-building and failing to factor in the key wider, background social issues. Despite the Secretary of State's stated commitment to evidence-based policy, it seems significant that there is no allusion to any of the above authors in the two recent DfE publications on the topic, one of which entailed a literature review (DfE 2017a; DfE 2018). Reference is made, however, to Bennett's paper:

> *Following the publication of Tom Bennett's Review of Behaviour Management in Schools in March 2017,* we have been implementing his recommendations and promoting the effective practice shared in his report.* (DfE, 2018:14)

Reference is also made in DfE (2018) to children with an SEN disability or with an SEN statement: 'Most of these have a social, emotional or mental health (SEMH) need,

which has implications for their behaviour' (DfE 2018:8). Elsewhere in the report, such children are described as 'vulnerable'. The risk here is to create two groups among excluded students – those with a *clinical disorder* and those who are simply *unruly*.

The tone of the report implies a need to fix problems, and what seems to be missing is a vision of how to construct school cultures that are better suited to dealing with emotional volatility and that create harmonious learning environments for all students. As in earlier documentation, it is the punitive, sanctions-based approaches which are highlighted:

> *From tackling low- level disruption to dealing with more challenging incidents, effective schools have strategies and interventions to systematically address misbehaviour. Tackling poor behaviour allows teachers to teach and children to learn. This approach, backed up by a strong, whole-school culture, can help reduce incidents of poor behaviour that result in exclusion. We have made progress in giving schools the tools to manage poor behaviour within their school, including allowing schools to hold same-day detentions, but there is more that can be done to help schools to adopt effective whole-school approaches.* (DfE 2018:8)

The focus on the 'failure' of PRUs to meet academic targets (DfE, 2015b) and the emphasis on behavioural issues seems to overlook the actual evidence from empirical studies, a trend that seems likely only to increase the cycle of marginalization. For some students, we would suggest, social and cultural environments of mainstream schools in their present form are simply not the best places for students in need of significant emotional support. Indeed, our contention is that creating settings for all students that are more caring, with a focus on schools as communities and improved teacher-student and student-student relationships, would be beneficial to all (Noddings, 2005; Velasquez et al, 2013).

The overall inference that can be drawn from this evidence - and one that is supported by Dingwall & Sebba's (2017) independent evaluation of the B&NES and BSU programme programme - is that attachment-aware/emotion coaching approaches have a potentially significant impact on pupils, teachers and families. In terms of the binary analysis with which this paper began, the approach appears to be clearly situated within the child-centred, holistic tradition, even though its effect might be seen as normative, in socialising the child and making him or her 'ready to learn' within an education system over which he or she has little control (see, for example Bomber & Hughes, 2013). The issue is as to what extent this is experienced as empowering or simply a way of cooling out potentially challenging children.

Drawing on Spratt's (2016) typology, although the literature reviews put forward by Rose et al have a strong neuroscientific basis, with potential links to physical health (Spratt's category 1), it appears that the analysis relates most strongly to category 2 – social and emotional literacy – both of which Spratt associates most closely with normative approaches.

However, while there is relatively little reference to pedagogical approaches per se, there is considerable emphasis on 'flourishing' – Spratt's category 4. This may well reflect the actual sample of professionals reporting outcomes within the projects from which this evidence is taken – within the Somerset study, for example, fewer than 70% of respondents were actually working in schools, and of these a significant number were classroom assistants or home/family liaison workers. Similarly, while some of the ideas underlying the attachment aware schools programme originated from social care - Spratt's category 3 – it was specifically intended to promote the voice and influence of vulnerable children, especially those in care, reflecting the dialogic encounter, rather than the normative approach. Further, in terms of the general debate concerning behaviour and the regulation of children in schools – and particularly the assertions of writers such as Bennett (2017) - the attachment aware school approach has specifically challenged the behaviourist model – see Parker et al (2016).

Conclusion

The division of education into oppositional camps is not in the interests of learners or teachers. Indeed, it seems almost perverse to still be arguing over *false dualisms* (Pring, 1995:183). It is important to understand the reasons behind the polarisation between *liberal/progressive* and *conservative/traditional* thinking in education. There seems no inherent intellectual contradiction between seeking to transmit key knowledge / skills in schools, while also promoting emotional wellbeing, self-awareness and strong-inter-personal skills. And yet, entrenched, opposing camps seem to have set up fortifications between them. In the UK context, this has been far more than an education debate; the reactions to education initiatives of the 1960s suggest that the misgivings of critics were often about wider social issues, such as perceived associations between educational reforms, civil disobedience and the permissive society (Galton et al, 1980; Hampshire & Lewis, 2004).

Politicising the discourse is liable to result in distortions. It is from a *common sense* not an ideological position that we agree with the view that knowledge is fundamentally linked to the question of social relationships, and that means that the critical pursuit of knowledge needs to be paralleled by the process of mutual humanisation (Giroux, 1981:130-133). Furthermore, it is misleading to interpret as a political act student resistance to

education processes involving knowledge that is both universalised and decontextualised. When students cause disruption in the classroom, it does not commonly occur after deep reflection on Adorno's notions of negativity, contradiction and mediation (Adorno, 1973); more likely, they do not like the teacher or are just bored.

As already suggested, Bennett's report (DfE, 2017a) connects 'behaviour' to outcomes, but does not identify any reasons why some children might not engage with education. There is no sense that the curriculum might appear to have no relevance to large numbers of children; no sense that a certain number might be dealing with issues external to school that might affect behaviour. While reference is made (DfE, 2017a: 21) to a survey suggesting that 34% of staff have experienced mental health issues as a consequence of student misbehaviour / aggression, there is no reference at all to mental health issues among students. Nor is any reference made to the recent statistics on children's mental health that suggest that 12.5% of 10 to 15 year olds reported symptoms of mental ill-health (Office for National Statistics, 2015). One DfE publication does connect behaviour in schools to mental health (DfE 2016c), helpful to an extent, but focusing only on problems. Discussion on student wellbeing and engagement would shift perceptions, radically. Otherwise, student disinterest is liable to be pathologised as e.g. ADHD, whereby there is a tendency to confuse symptoms with cause (Tait, 2010). It seems, however, that discourse around e.g. *contentment* in the school environment is anathema in policy circles.

There is a need to understand the reasons for the (false) separation between the *learning child* and *the feeling child*. The two would seem interconnected, and, in our view, classroom relationships, connections between learning and experience, enjoyment of new knowledge/skills, and in general, motivation, seem of greater salience in improving engagement than behaviour/control mechanisms in schools. Reconfiguring school cultures so as to address the emotional needs of young people will involve careful reflection and investment of time and energy. It will require intensive work, often in small groups, enabling teachers to take into consideration each child's unique emotional and learning landscape (Levinson and Thompson, 2016). The development of attachment-aware environments seems a sound and sensible means of pursuing this:

> *'Effective social and psychological change requires an overarching narrative that rings true for those concerned. Given the limitations to current thinking just outlined, we contend that one that offers the best fit, greatest hope and scope is Attachment Theory'* (Holmes & Parker 2018:1)

It will also require a shift in thinking, the enlightenment that such a change of focus is actually likely to result in better learning outcomes. There remains strong resistance to such thinking. Child-centred learning approaches have become unfashionable in mainstream education, often held accountable for falling standards (Howlett, 2013; Standish, 2007).

In the UK context, there is likely to be strong political resistance to any shift when the priorities of the education agenda have been constructed through a vocabulary of competitiveness in a global race (Finn, 2015). As Bailey, Ball and other commentators point out, such changes challenge both neoliberal and neoconservative approaches to education, with their emphasis on increasing privatisation, performativity, monitoring standards and conformity (Bailey & Ball, 2016; Ball, 2017; Jones, 2014). By contrast commentators such as Ecclestone (2017) present such resistance as merely masking another facet of neoliberal development.

The focus on behaviour mirrors, in our view, a narrow, impoverished conception of education. There is no engagement with the wider possibilities. Education should not be perceived merely as knowledge/skill transmission; it needs to work outwards from the individual. Biesta (2006) proposed three elements: *socialisation*, *qualification* and *subjectification*. The last of these has been somewhat overlooked by policy-makers and practitioners, concerning social and political issues, and human development. Perhaps, one problem has been the failure to convert into something concrete aspirations to 'nurture understanding of what it is to be human', and to 'enable pupils to reach a personal resolution of what that means' (Pring, 1999:169). As noted by Hand (2016), there was no sense in Pring's proposal as to how this might look in the classroom – all of which calls out for programmes that will develop empathy and self-understanding.

In the meantime, we feel that it is superficial to focus on *poor behaviour* in schools when there is a more important discourse that is needed around the *reasons* for poor behaviour, not to mention the still deeper layer around the *purposes* of education. Quite simply, we would argue that the separate research projects reported here highlight something that strikes us as being rather obvious – that young people are happier and more effective in environments in which they have been given opportunities to express their feelings about events and relationships in which they are involved. Education should not happen around students; nor should it be performed on them; they should be active agents in a collaborative process.

Word count 7944

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