

Creating a whole school ethos of care.

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Abstract

This paper raises questions about schools as positive models of caring societies. Against a background of growing concern for the mental health of children it addresses the centrality of 'nurture' and its close cousin 'care' as a whole school value, theorised as both a means and an end of schooling. How might school leaders communicate a principle of mutual care and inspire whole school commitment from staff, pupils and parents? Discussion is informed by qualitative data (interviews, focus groups and observations) from a comparative study of seven schools in the NW of England which use the principles and practices of Nurture Groups (NGs). Three demonstrated strong leadership based on 'deep care' and an emphasis on ongoing relationships with children. The paper concludes that leadership as evidenced in the good practice reported here can go some way towards bringing about the ideal of a whole school ethos of care.

Key words:

Care, nurture, whole school, leadership

Introduction

The broad purpose of this paper, in line with the journal's aims, is to contribute to readers' understandings of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and our developing knowledge of appropriate ways of preventing and responding to EBDs, in terms of intervention and policy. More specifically the intention is to draw together a set of thoughts about the potential for schools to be beacons of caring practices within their communities. A number of experiences, theoretical, empirical and policy focused, have informed this aim. Firstly the growing public recognition that the UK is not doing well on children's mental health. Secondly an education policy struggle around the purposes of education which is leading to a polarisation between academic achievement purposes and holistic educational aims based on the teaching of social, emotional and moral values. Thirdly an engagement with theories of mutual care which draw together curriculum focused concerns (what is taught) and pedagogic concerns (how it is taught). Finally, I have the opportunity to draw on a set of data from primary schools in the NW of the UK which was collected from environments that very specifically focus on operationalising the concept of nurture.

A landmark moment in public concern about UK children's well-being was the publication of the UNICEF Child well-being report in 2007 which showed the poor performance of UK children in comparison with the other sampled OECD countries. Since that time there has been an increasing

public interest within the UK in children's mental health and overall emotional well-being with a strong media interest whenever relevant research findings are produced. A recent report by The Children's Society that caught the public eye (Pople et al, 2015) was produced with the widely reported headline that English children rank 14 out of the 15 surveyed countries for wellbeing in school. The new SEN legislation in England now identifies 'Social, emotional and mental health' as one of the dimensions of SEN (Norwich and Eaton, 2015) and further evidence for this concern can be seen in the current NSPCC/ESRC (2016) call for research into children's mental health.

This disquiet over children's overall well-being and happiness has led to renewed policy interest in the broad purposes of education. For example, in November 2015 the government's Education Select Committee, opened an inquiry into the purpose and quality of education for children of all ages in England, Submissions were published in February 2016 and the process is still open at the time of writing, although comments from the chair of OfSTED (the UK's inspection organisation) have sidelined the discussion of purposes and emphasised quality and measurement of education. The Compass Education Group (2015) funded by the National Union of Teachers published their 'Big Education' report which presents its vision of a reformed education system based on values of equality, democracy and sustainability with 'a sense of citizenship at its heart' (p25).

There has been a renewed academic interest in educational philosophy and purposes , for example Biesta (2008), Fielding and Moss (2011) and Wrigley, Thomson and Lingard (2012). Biesta (2008) called for a discussion of purposes of education and argued that the theorisation of educational goals has been displaced by a focus on measurement and comparison of educational outcomes in a performance focused educational climate influenced by neo-liberalism. He says 'if we do not tackle the questions as to what constitutes good education head on - we run the risk that statistics league tables will make these decisions for us' (p 44). Fielding and Moss (2011) elevate care as a value that is integral to their rethink of educational purposes which is based on 'education in its broadest sense' (EBS) as a reversal of neoliberal education policy which is a 'techno-managerial exercise in control and normalisation' (p. 38). Recognizing that care has been undervalued as a soft element of education Wrigley, Thomson and Lingard (2012) say that care is not a 'wooly' ideal but is at the centre of intellectually demanding and equitable pedagogies.

In the following section I will explore the concept of mutual care as a means and ends of schooling, combining the concept of attachment derived from the nurture group tradition with ideas drawn from writers who have described a feminist ethic of care. I will then elaborate on the concept of 'whole school'.

Theoretical framework

Nurture and its close cousin care

This paper draws on a study that is positioned within the specific tradition of 'nurture' and funded by the Nurture Group Network to examine the aspects of nurture group (NG) provision. The concept of nurture and its associated practice in the establishment of Nurture Groups was pioneered in the 1970s by Marjorie Boxall and is now enjoying a renewal of interest and practice with an expanding field of scholarship (See Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005 and Bennet, 2014 for overviews). Consequently, the concept of nurture is at the heart of the study.

The term 'nurture' now has a very specific meaning within school policy especially with regard to children with EBD. It signifies this particular approach and set of associated practices and usually implies the provision of a specific nurture group. Theoretically, nurture groups imply an investment in the importance of attachment theory and its application to committed ongoing relationships with children in school. However, in its non-specific, everyday usage the term 'nurture' is synonymous with 'care'.

The 'feminist ethic of care' is based on the pioneering work of Noddings, (1984; 2005) and Tronto (for example: Fisher and Tronto 1990; Tronto, 1993; Tronto 2006). Tronto's work in particular unpacks the concept of care in considerable detail starting from her definition of care as inclusive of 'everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web' (Fisher and Tronto 1990, p 41), These authors present a care ethic based on the realities of interdependency: the understanding that we are all *receivers* of care as well as care providers (Noddings, 1984, 2005; Tronto, 2006). This relational reframing of care can be seen as both the ends and the means of schooling. Indeed it places care at the centre of education, both as a way of describing teaching *and* a way of conceptualising a key set of values that could be taught (Warin and Gannerud, 2014; Spratt, 2016)

The theory outlined above with its emphasis on recognising that we are receivers as well as givers of care dissolves the artificial boundary that exists between caring purposes of education and knowledge creating purposes of education. Simultaneously, it dissolves another artificial boundary that exists between pedagogy and curriculum, what is taught and how it is taught. The integration of the pastoral function of school with its knowledge creating function and the integration of pedagogy and curriculum suggest both a holistic form of education and a 'whole school' approach to delivering it.

'Whole school' approach

Since Weare's (2000) promotion of a whole-school approach to children's mental health there has been increasing recognition for the need to develop a culture of support for children's social and emotional wellbeing that permeates the entire school and is sustained as far as possible by the whole school community. Isolated efforts from individual staff within schools, and 'add on' support such as school counsellors, specific curriculum opportunities like PSHE (personal, social, health, economic) education, and discrete Citizenship lessons, can easily be undermined by the promotion of counter values from other staff. Inconsistencies in values can be readily observed in some schools, especially in relation to behaviour management and school discipline matters. Indeed this emotive aspect of school life often seems to surface clashes of values. For example, Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) draw attention to the need for quality communication between nurture group staff and mainstream staff in order to prevent a 'fuzziness' of values and goals. The need for a whole school approach is articulated strongly in relation to holistic education and overall wellbeing concerns such as physical health, nutrition, safety from bullying, the fostering of good peer relationships, and good communication between teachers and pupils. The term 'whole school' was used by Wyn, Cahill, Holdsworth, Rowling and Carson (2000) in connection with mental health in their national mental health promotion programme for schools in Australia. 'Whole school' was continued within Weare's later work on the development of emotional literacy (2004) and has also been used in the adoption of restorative justice in schools (Hopkins, 2011). Spratt et al (2006) reminds us that when the mental health and wellbeing of *all* pupils is targeted in a whole-school approach the whole community will benefit, not only those who are experiencing difficulties.

The DfE (2009) define the term as follows:

A whole school approach is cohesive, collective and collaborative action in and by a school community that has been strategically constructed to improve student learning, behaviour and wellbeing, and the conditions that support these. (DfE, 2009)

The term 'school community' in this definition above invites a question about how we conceptualise 'whole school' in relation to pupils' families and its neighbourhood. It also begs a question about where the school's set of responsibilities begin and end. Evaluation of England's Pupil Premium funding shows that many schools living in areas of high social disadvantage are assuming a responsibility for inspiring a vision of care within a large population that extends well beyond its staff and pupils. The most recent winner of England's Pupil Premium Awards scheme, Charter Academy in Portsmouth, led by Head Dame Sharon Hollows, attributes its success to the efforts put into outreach work with pupils' families including many visits to homes to build relationships with parents (Westminster Education Forum, 2016). This work is admirable and successful but it raises questions about the responsibility of schools and how we may understand the concept of school community.

Whole school collaboration centred on caring and nurturing principles can be galvanised through the principles and practices associated with the nurture group tradition. Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) make the point that the nurture group strategy impacts on the schools' wider community since it has a

positive influence on parents' attitudes towards their own children and the school. Other research specifically focused on nurture groups in relation to whole school approaches tells us that successful NGs contribute to the development of the 'nurturing school' (Cooper and Whitebread, (2007; Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005). The creation of a nurturing culture where all staff sing from the same, nurturing, song sheet, implicates the all-important role of school leadership. A key question is: How might school leaders communicate a principle of mutual care and inspire whole school commitment from staff, pupils and parents?

Overview of the study

In order to answer this question I draw on an analysis of data from a comparative study of seven primary schools in the NW of England. The study was carried out by the Centre for Social Justice and Wellbeing in Education, Lancaster University funded by the Nurture Group Network and reported in Warin and Hibbin, (2016). The seven settings were selected because they shared a commitment to the principles and practices of Nurture Groups, making the concepts of care and nurture implicit in the study. Examination of the dimension of 'whole school' formed a focus of the analysis of the data. So discussion of this study makes a very appropriate platform for discussing wider ideals about the creation of a whole school ethos of care.

Methodology

As we were seeking to explore a range of types of nurture practice we chose a mix of schools that had specific nurture groups together with alternative settings who had a more integrated approach. Our sampling criteria were based on Bennett's overview (2014) of influences on NG outcomes: leadership commitment and whole school understanding; size of setting; longevity of provision; and level and quality of staff training. We also had advice from a 'gatekeeper' to relevant settings, an educational psychologist in the NW of England who has a long history of NG training and consultancy and was able to provide local knowledge and access. We selected seven settings covering the UK primary school age group (4/5 to 11/12) all in the NW of England, including urban/rural, large/small, NG trained/untrained, long established NG/newly established NG . Five of these (settings 1 – 5) conformed to traditional NG provision with separate nurture provision in discrete nurture rooms that were within the body of the school or located in a separate building within the school grounds. We also selected two alternative provisions that operated with nurturing principles with a clear emphasis on relationships and an acknowledgement of the importance of early attachments (settings 3 and 6). Setting 6 was selected because it had a long history of nurture group training for staff and nurture principles embedded across the whole school. Shortly before our study began this setting had taken the decision to disband its discrete NGs and operationalise a vision of whole school nurture. Setting 7 was a small, residential, special school characterised by adherence to principles strongly based on nurture provision, attachment and relationships. It catered for children of the primary school age group with extreme social and emotional difficulties.

Each setting was visited on three subsequent occasions and included the following data collection strategies: interviews with Heads; focus groups with a mix of NG/mainstream staff; interviews with NG staff; tours of the school; observations within the NG rooms; collection of Boxall profiles (NG specific monitoring system). We also carried out two child case studies within each school. Our overall aim was to compare the settings to understand more about what kinds of psychosocial interventions impact beneficially on vulnerable children. As our focus here is on the leadership and management aspects of a whole school orientation to nurture group principles it does not include detail at the level of the child's own experience. The interested reader can see more about the individual child studies (14 in total) and further details about the methodology in Warin and Hibbin, (2016). Ethical issues were managed in accordance with Lancaster University's ethical approval procedure. Informed consent was gained through the provision of participant information sheets for Heads, staff and parents, with Heads acting as gate-keepers. All names have been anonymised.

Transcribed interviews, field notes, and school records were entered into the software analytic system NVivo. We then undertook analysis of the data collected for each setting developing a case study approach across five different dimensions of focus: the individual pupil; the NG/alternative provision; the mainstream class; the whole school; parents/carers. A further comparative analysis was then conducted looking across the data for each setting again using each of these five dimensions. In this paper we particularly focus on the analysis and conclusions produced through the 'whole school' dimension, highlighting school leadership.

Findings. Leadership based on a relationships emphasis in 'nurturing' schools

The definition of whole school used above emphasises consistency, collaboration and a 'concerted' effort across the school. Following the implicit 'concert' metaphor we found that staff were singing from different song sheets in some schools and undermining each other's efforts. Whereas in other settings, especially settings 3, 6 and 7 we noted a much more harmonious collaboration in which we heard the same values articulated by different members of the school community.

These three settings demonstrated strong leadership regarding the NG principle of attachment and had managed to build a whole-school focus on nurture. They implemented practices to provide an ongoing commitment to each child's overall wellbeing despite difficulties such as challenging behaviour. They were also the settings with the strongest priority for work with parents. For example Setting 3 provided a parent managed support group, courses in cookery skills, child development, an adult college group, and employed a social services trained parent liaison worker. In Setting 6 parental provision had been formalised into a charity working around issues of food poverty giving out food parcels, and encouraging participation in the cookery school and mobile food service. Members of the Emotional Wellbeing Team in this setting would regularly take parents to Citizens Advice and debt counselling.

I now elaborate on these broad findings more specifically, in relation to this paper's focus on creating a whole school ethic of care, and the question posed above about how school leaders can communicate a principle of mutual care and inspire whole school commitment from staff, pupils and parents. The relevant findings are set out under two related headings: a commitment to the support and training of the whole staff base; an emphasis on relationships which includes an understanding of children's behaviour as communication. Our analysis suggests that these represent two key qualities for the successful provision of nurturing principles and practices for a whole school community.

1. Support and training of the whole staff and careful recruitment .

Our findings showed that some specific leadership practices were crucial to the communication and support of whole school nurturing ethos. These included: the recruitment of like-minded staff who already share the same values and do not have to be persuaded into a different philosophy; formal and informal training; a school climate in which staff feel valued, listened to and supported when responding to very challenging children; careful management of disagreements over the most appropriate strategies for individual children.

Recruitment and retention of staff was seen as a crucial element of a whole school approach, getting the right person for the job (Davies, 2011). Recruitment practices aimed to reveal how far potential employees could buy into the nurturing philosophy and contribute to the whole school approach. As the Head of setting 3 told us:

...it's a mind-set [nurture]. You can either work with it or you can't ...if somebody has a sympathy towards it you can train them. But if somebody is absolutely adamant that it is ridiculous, [and thinks] 'they just need a bit of discipline...they've got to survive in the real world', then if you've got that resistance, you're not going to break through it. So at some point somebody needs to make a decision about whether this is the right place for them. If they really don't support that fundamental philosophy then this isn't going to be right.

This Head also explained her approach to the provision of nurture group training, recognising the need for co-operation between mainstream teachers and nurture group staff:

...we had some training when we first started...worked with the whole school on being a nurturing school so that we could get those nurturing principles in the classroom, because the children are only in the nurture group in the morning and then they go back to class in the afternoon. So there has to be that same approach and an understanding of what they've been doing in the morning, in the classroom...

Leaders in settings 3 6 and 7 provided a high level of whole school informal in-house training with a to-ing and fro-ing of staff between mainstream and nurture to promote an experiential understanding of NG principles and practices. By contrast the four other settings offered NG CPD training exclusively

to NG designated staff or made it optional for mainstream staff. Some mainstream staff simply felt this was not for them 'not my job'. This element of choice exacerbated differences between staff who were explicitly recognised as NG people and others. In Setting 1 the Head told us that some staff held a more traditional idea of school and their role within it 'where children come in to learn... and we are teachers, not social workers or counsellors or psychologists'. Similarly the leadership in Setting 2 did not succeed in integrating a value for nurture group ideology across the school. There was a deep division of values between NG staff and mainstream with the latter group questioning the value of the discrete nurture group provision and perceiving it as a 'soft option for naughty kids'. The teacher of year 5 and 6 in this small school was critical of the NG staff and raised the problem of inconsistencies in responses to children:

rules are rules and if it's going to work, you've got to stick to them...even in the nurture room, because their theory is we don't have rules, we have expectations which is fine, but if they're doing whatever they want in there and are swearing in there, then they think I'm getting away with it in there... so when they go back into class...they're like 'I could do that in there and I didn't go on report'...so there's no consistency is the issue..

The Head of this setting seemed unable to prioritise and inspire a concerted focus aiming instead to accommodate the incompatible views of his staff.

...trying to make the behaviour system in school as simple as possible ...Running that alongside that kind of nurture approach and understanding, that's been a little bit, for me the conflict of trying to get your philosophical head...around, how do I do a system which is consequence based, and I've got this nurture system going as well...

His leadership did not resolve the problems of inconsistent staff philosophies and resulted in an inability to fully integrate nurturing approaches in school.

In Setting 7 there was an understanding, communicated from the senior leadership, that the whole school could be understood as a therapeutic community. All staff members were responsible for the psychosocial wellbeing of the child, from welfare staff to Head. There was no hierarchy in terms of who received training in nurture. Everyone who worked at the school was trained within the school's own self-devised training system. As the Head told us:

because it's really important that every single person who the children come in contact with has got the same approach. It's no good if the cleaner goes and shouts at them

In addition to the training received in setting 7 there were support strategies for staff such as weekly opportunities for problem focused clinical support sessions with a visiting psychotherapist. The leadership here emphasised the importance of good relationships between staff as model for the children and because mutual support was considered vital in a setting concerned with some very difficult, traumatised children. Similarly, in Setting 6 there was emotional support for staff on 'how it

makes me feel' when classroom teachers and teaching assistants were challenged by children's more problematic behaviour.

2.An emphasis on relationships.

All seven settings were selected because they embodied a philosophy derived from the nurture group tradition so there would naturally be expectations of finding attachment principles in action. The ideal of ongoing commitment as a deep form of attachment is tested particularly in decisions about exclusion from school. In Setting 3 the Head had taken the decision not to terminally exclude during her leadership of the school::

...It [exclusion] just wasn't right...it felt unintelligent, it felt clumsy...All the things you were telling the child off for doing in terms of reacting rather than thinking, in terms of showing a lack of understanding, was exactly what we were doing in response to the child. It just didn't feel right on any level at all

Similarly, the leadership in Setting 7 was focused on the provision of ongoing emotional security and attachment for the pupils, many of whom had experienced neglect and abuse from parents and carers, with some quite extreme cases. The Head explained her approach to exclusion:

...we will never exclude them, we will never send them anywhere else. I've worked in places they do exclude and the kids get the message, punch a teacher, scratch a number of cars, break enough windows and you go out of here...that doesn't feel to me like the right place to get the children through feeling really emotionally secure and safe

This head also described her approach as form of 'unconditional positive regard' for children , drawing on Rogerian principles (Rogers, 1951) and she noted that staff had to be both willing and able to repair broken relationships as well as maintain good ones: '...it's part of the whole approach... After something negative has happened is it's the adult's responsibility to get that relationship repaired'.

An advantage of a whole school value for, and understanding of, attachment means that there is flexibility about who each child might attach to. For example in setting 3 we were told about how Josi had particularly bonded with the integrated arts therapist. During the school holidays she had suddenly told her grandmother, 'I need to talk to Sarah' and insisted that only Sarah would do. In setting 7 we were told that some children had formed strong attachments with non-teaching staff such as the groundsman and caterer. So it was particularly beneficial that this school included absolutely all staff within their training programme.

A whole school emphasis on the quality of school relationships should naturally extend to children's relationships with each other. It is a difficult research challenge to capture data that adequately reflects the quality, fluidity and complexity of children's peer relationship. In order to test out the rhetoric we heard about the promotion of mutual kindness and care between pupils we would need to have undertaken a more immersive methodology such as ethnography. However, our observations undertaken in three subsequent visits to each setting did to a certain extent capture elements of

classroom climate with regard to the existence of supportive and caring peer relationships. For example, in a nurture group in setting 2 we observed a 'Show and Tell' activity with special objects bought from home. We noted a highly supportive attitude amongst the children who encouraged each other to get up and make their short presentations. They were generous with their praise and emotionally literate in identifying matters of confidence.

A key attribute of the relationality of settings 3, 6 and 7 was their recognition of children's behaviour as communication (Evans and Lester, 2013; NGN, 2016). Practical, moment by moment decisions about how to handle challenging behaviour really shine a light on teachers' values and expose their deep seated vocational purposes: when and how to reward behaviour, when and how to correct, when to use a restorative justice approach; when to turn a blind eye. An armoury of explicit strategies may be gained through training and experience but the teacher also relies on a much deeper and more spontaneous set of responses that implicitly convey their beliefs about their purposes in relation to the children they are teaching and caring for, especially when children have pronounced emotional and behavioural difficulties. In setting 7 a care worker said: 'You nurture that actual child itself and not the behaviours' Similarly the Head of setting 3 told us:

...once you stop reacting to the behaviour and looking at behaviour instead as 'what is that telling me about the child', it's distress so often that is causing that [the behaviour]....

Summary of findings

Our findings help us to examine the kinds of leadership that can inspire whole school commitment to the nurturing ethos and the kind of care/nurture that is at the heart of that vision. In settings 3,6 and 7 we found:

A commitment to the support and training of the staff who have to handle, on a daily basis, complex and challenging social and emotional relationships with vulnerable children. Training and support of all staff to understand the key, and sometimes controversial, principles of nurture;

An understanding of relationality and a commitment to ongoing relationships: attachment in action.

A further line of enquiry woven through this study, discussed fully in Warin and Hibbin, 2016, concerns a debate about the value of discrete nurture groups versus an integrated nurture policy across the whole school. Are the principles of nurturing, derived from the nurture group tradition implemented most effectively through the provision of specialised classes or are they best practised through an integrated nurturing philosophy that runs across the whole school? Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) provide a full and critical discussion of the opportunity costs and gains of discrete nurture groups. They conclude that nurture groups are most effective when they are fully integrated within the mainstream school rather than an 'add-on'. Our study similarly concluded that schools need to work on both practice fronts together. Nurture group principles are most effectively implemented through

the simultaneous provision of specialised Nurture Group classes as well as through an integrated nurturing philosophy that runs across the whole school.

Discussion

Our findings emphasise the role of strong leadership in creating a whole school ethos of care within settings that have a particular concern with the tradition of nurture group principles, especially its emphasis on attachment. We now move beyond the specifics of this particular study, and related studies of nurture groups, to ask how far we can expand these findings to all schools. How far can a value for nurture and care underpin a school's overall mission and ethos? Is 'care' the optimal value we can place at the heart of schooling purposes?

A strong rationale for an emphasis on 'care' as a preferred driving concept is that it is quite closely aligned to the well-established school concept of citizenship and can be mapped onto Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) school development, now mandatory in English schools. The concept of care not only marshals an emphasis on relationships (the *how* of teaching) but it also has implications for *what* is taught, the curriculum.

Both Lynch, Bkaer and Lyons (2009) and Noddings (2005) link together care and love within their efforts to elevate the status of these related values within social and educational policy and research. Lynch et al claim that 'love and care have not been regarded as subjects of sufficient political importance to be mainstreamed in theory or empirical investigations' (p 2) presenting love and care as work requiring a huge investment of time, energy and effort. Noddings, (2005) links care and love in her much quoted statement that education should be focused on themes of care rather than traditional subject disciplines. 'Its main aim should be to produce people who are not only competent, but caring, loving, and lovable' (cited in Fielding and Moss, 2011 p.63).

Understanding an ethic of care as an interdependency between pedagogy and curriculum

We return to the feminist 'ethic of care' framework introduced earlier to explore how far a value for care has the potential to underpin a school's overall mission and ethos. As Spratt points out (2016) care does not just play a *supporting* function in enabling children to engage in school but it is required to form the educational experiences that will enhance human flourishing. We need to learn *how* to care for each other. Noddings (2005) states that caring 'is a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviors' (p. 17) and argues the need for education and competency in learning to care. Her views are echoed in Warin's (2014) discussion of the 'status of care' which presents care as both an educational means and end with implications for curriculum and pedagogy. The data discussed in this paper has not focused to a great extent on content of children's learning, but has focused much more

on pedagogy. This is partly because, as Fielding and Moss (2011) remind us, 'The inculcation of an ethic of care is most likely to come about in an institution that practices that ethic in everyday life and relationships' (Fielding and Moss p40)

Nevertheless there are clear implications for the curriculum. As Noddings suggests, we need a curriculum that emphasises practices and strategies of mutual care. Indeed, she argued that education should actually be organised around dimensions of care: 'care for self, care for intimate others, care for associates and distant others, for nonhuman life, for the human-made environment of objects and instruments, and for ideas' (Noddings, 2005, p47). Unless moral values such as care are somehow specifically stated as curriculum goals there is a risk that they do not receive sufficient attention. The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) initiative introduced under the New Labour government in the UK is noteworthy because it attempted to provide, simultaneously, a discrete curriculum with specific lessons and it provided guidelines for whole-school strategies such as assemblies and wall displays. However, it took a back seat as an initiative when the new coalition government was elected in the UK and the nearest equivalent we now have is SMSC. This is now mandatory in English schools, a status which is backed by its inclusion within the UK's school inspection regime OfSTED. However, it is being side-lined due to the continuous priority for improving performance in public examinations (RSA, 2014) On close inspection it has very little to do with social, moral, spiritual and cultural values such as mutual care and much more to do with the advancing a very different agenda, the instilling of 'fundamental British values'. Of course one way to elevate the status of a moral curriculum is to subject it to the public exams system. In the UK Biesta's comment on measurement in relation to educational goals is apposite with regard to this problematic idea. He asks whether we are measuring what we value or whether we are 'just measuring what we can easily measure and thus end up valuing what we (can) measure' (p. 35).

Understanding an ethic of care as an emphasis on school relationships. Deep care and mutual care

Whilst it is quite easy to argue for a 'whole school ethos of care' (who would not want this?) we need a definition of care that includes within it the strength of commitment that is represented within the idea of attachment and therefore present within the nurture group tradition. Wrigley, Thompson and Lingard present the idea of 'deep care' as a central element of their discussion of educational reform. 'Deep care is central to socially just pedagogies, which understand the need to scaffold from where the students are at, in respectful ways' (p. 196). This concept is fertile one for encompassing the ideal of the *ongoing* nature of care between humans that is the essence of attachment. When staff and indeed peers, form relationships with children who are vulnerable, traumatised and 'difficult' there has to be an element of ongoing commitment, a meaning of care that suggests the carer will continue to be 'there' for the child come what may. The more challenging the children the more this commitment is evident and the more it requires strong leadership to ensure this approach to children is shared across staff and bolstered with appropriate training and support.

Translating a feminist ethic of care into practice is challenging. It means that we recognise care as an interdependency between human beings and it deconstructs the traditional power dimensions of the carer's power over those that are 'cared for'. A nice illustration is the teacher in setting seven, quoted above, who recognised that within the intense relationship- building part of her work with EBDS she has to frequently 'repair broken relationships'. She expresses an idea that there is an ongoing mutual responsibility to keep the attachment alive. An ethic of *mutual* care has implications for children's relationships with each other. We were not party to the work that had prepared the way for the empathic responses we witnessed between children in the 'Show and Tell' session in the nurture group at setting 2 but it was clearly something that had not happened overnight.

This paper's emphasis on the creation and support of a whole school ethic of care invites questions about how far we understand the reach of the school into its community and its work with parents. Settings three and six were particularly noteworthy for the considerable efforts that were put into working with parents, as described above. Indeed their efforts are remarkably similar to the much praised efforts of the Pupil Premium champion referred to earlier. If it is challenging to create an ethic of care as a whole school it is even more challenging to communicate this vision with parents, and sometimes to navigate inconsistencies between the cultural values of home and school (Wood and Warin, 2014). A key issue within the nurture group tradition, as we found in our study, concerned issues about parental consent for children to be placed in nurture groups and school strategies for co-operating with parents. This is discussed more fully in Warin and Hibbin, 2016 and has also been debated within related research on nurture groups (Cooper, Arnold and Boyd, 2001; O'Connor and Colwell, 2002; Cooper and Tiknaz, 2005, Sanders, 2007; Davies, 2011). There is an emerging consensus from this work that relationships with parents must be positive and nonthreatening and there must be a clear communication of nurture principles.

There is another way to understand a school's relation to its wider community with regard to creating an ethic of care. In the same way that an admirable teacher or head can provide an inspirational role model, the school can also be seen as a beacon of positive values. This model of schools is enshrined in Dewey's classic work (1959) where he portrays the school as a habitat where the child learns through directed living: 'in school the child gets the chance to be in a 'miniature community, and embryonic society' where the aim is not the economic value of the end products, but ' the development of social power and insight' and 'openness to the possibilities of the human spirit'(p18) .

Conclusion

In the current educational policy climate school leaders have to be immensely principled and strong minded to resist emphasising academic success as the most important goal of practice in the school. We encountered three such leaders during this study, in settings 3, 6 and 7. Our data showed that these three settings had managed to create a culture of shared nurturing values, interpreted as an

emphasis on relationships and committed ongoing attachment to each child, a whole school 'ethos of care'. Their practice goes some way to operationalise a combination of theoretical principles that are drawn from attachment theory and from a feminist ethic of care. These leaders were motivated by an impressive combination of determined and deep care for their pupils.

There are some specific elements of this ideal that really need emphasis in order to rally the necessary workforce of skilful highly trained professionals who can lead and implement this vision:

- an emphasis on leadership as the ability to inspire a shared vision across staff supported by the necessary recruitment, training, communication of values and opportunities for reflection
- A value for the kind of care that can withstand threats and potential breaking of bonds and relationship exclusion, particularly necessary for children who have emotional, behavioural difficulties.
- A recognition that care is both a means and an end of education with implications for pedagogy and also for curriculum.

The leadership we encountered was driven by compassion for the emotional and behavioural difficulties their pupils presented, the traumatic experiences some of them had experienced and the very disadvantaged circumstances that some of them lived in. Whilst the ideal of the development of a 'whole school ethos of care' may seem enormously idealistic we have seen some very good practice in this study which suggests that there are leaders out there with the capacity and skills to inspire this vision.

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