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Early Work By Student Researchers

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Contents

Editorial

Welcome to Issue 13 of SPARK. We have included a small selection of independent research conducted by students from Education Studies and Early Childhood Studies. We hope next year to recruit more student editors and authors to submit to SPARK. Students can put 'published author' on their CV as SPARK is recognised as an Open Source Journal by the British Library.

Jessica Delaney (Student editor)

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Angie Daly, Sue Kay-Flowers, Peter Wood (Staff editors)

Jessica Delaney

Education Studies and Early Years student

An Investigation into Facilitators' Views of the Value of the Rainbows Programme in Supporting Children Experiencing Loss in Three Schools in Merseyside.

This paper summarises findings from a research project aimed to investigate facilitators' views of the value of the Rainbows programme in supporting children in three local schools. The Rainbows programme is a support programme designed to support children who are experiencing or have recently experienced loss. Rainbows GB is a national charity which oversees delivery of the programme in 1200 schools (RainbowsGB.org.uk, 2019). As part of the Rainbows programme, members of staff in a variety of roles within a school are trained by local Registered Directors. This training allows those members of staff to become 'facilitators' within their schools, meaning they can provide sessions for children in need of bereavement support. Within these sessions, facilitators provide an emotionally safe environment in which children are helped to develop their self-esteem, confidence, and positive relationship-building skills, through the use of age appropriate materials.

The three aims of the research were:

1.   To identify the role of Rainbows GB in schools and the role of facilitators in supporting children experiencing loss and/or bereavement.

2.   To explore the opinions of trained facilitators of the Rainbows programme regarding the value of Rainbows GB. For?

3.   To evaluate the data gathered by facilitators in order to identify any potential areas for improvement within the Rainbows programme.

In meeting these aims, this study will consider previous evaluations undertaken regarding Rainbows programmes and any gaps in the knowledge obtained. The research will employ individual, semi-structured interviews with a sample of facilitators from three schools in Merseyside. After analysing the data from the interviews, this study will explain the findings and discuss their implications and consider any potential improvements to the Rainbows programmes.

Background

The motivation for developing this research project was to investigate the perceived value of support available to children who experience loss during childhood according to facilitators delivering the Rainbows programme in the United Kingdom. 'Loss', in this context, can encompass a number of experiences. According to McDermott (2018), loss describes not only death but also divorce or separation (sometimes termed 'relationship breakdown') as well as the incarceration of a family member, and even loss of trust as the result of a harmful or neglectful relationship with a family member or loved one. Several academics share this view (McLanahan, 1998; Granot, 2005), both argue that the term loss can refer to the loss of a beloved or significant person in a child's life, with McLanahan (1998) drawing evidence directly from children's responses to a prompt regarding people they have lost.

One support service which uses such a broad interpretation of loss and ensures that there are levels of support for children experiencing any of a variety of situations relating to loss, is Rainbows. Rainbows is a registered charity, which was established in Chicago, USA, and has progressed on to be employed in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Rainbows aims to provide sufficient training and support to staff members in schools, to become programme co-ordinators and facilitators, so that they may guide children through a peer support programme during periods of loss in the children's lives

(Hutchings, 2011). Rainbows is divided into a number of programmes, covering a range of age groups. Sunbeams offers support to children in the foundation stage, between the ages of 3 and 5 years. Rainbows is in place for children of primary school age, between 6 years and 12 years old. Beyond this are Spectrum which is aimed at young people between 13 and 18 years of age, Kaleidoscope for young adults 18 years and above, and Prism, which offers support to parents who are suffering a loss of their own and require support.

Previous evaluations of Rainbows do exist, however the studies are somewhat dated (Kramer and Lauman, 2000; Hutchings, 2011), this research study aims to address this by updating our existing knowledge and addressing some of the gaps, such as the views of facilitators, which were not specifically considered in previous evaluations. Kramer and Lauman (2000) conducted an evaluation of the Rainbows programme in Chicago, USA. This research discovered that particular strengths within the Rainbows programme were its ability to encourage children to share their feelings in a safe environment, and enabling parents to better communicate with their children. However, this research was conducted almost two decades ago, and so it is possible that these factors may no longer be the strengths of the programme. Also Kramer and Lauman's work (2000) exists solely in the context of Chicago, and therefore is not directly applicable to schools in the United Kingdom. In 2011 a second evaluation of the programme was conducted, this time in South Yorkshire in the United Kingdom This evaluation (Hutchings, 2011) found similar results to Kramer and Lauman's (2000), in that Rainbows has positive effects on children's self-esteem and confidence, and therefore their ability to talk to their family members about the loss they had experienced. This research project intends to update our knowledge base by exploring the views of a sample of facilitators working in schools drawn from the north west of England.

Methods

This research sought to consider the views of a sample of facilitators working in schools in Merseyside. It involved collecting data from a small and specific group of participants, which allowed the researcher to gain a small insight into a much bigger potential dataset (Denscombe, 2010).This means the study is exploratory in nature and not representative one of all facilitators in Rainbows.

This study sought to gather the opinions of facilitators from three schools in Merseyside, regarding their perception of the value of the Rainbows programme. Of the three schools, two were primary schools, and one was a secondary school. For the purposes of anonymity and confidentiality the schools will be referred to using numbers and the facilitators using letters. The first of the schools, a primary school, will be School 1, the facilitator from this school will be referred to as Facilitator A. The second school, a secondary school, will be School 2, with the facilitator as Facilitator B. The third school, another primary school, will be School 3, with the two facilitators from there referred to as Facilitator C and Facilitator D. In order to gather data from these participants, the study employed semi-structured, individual interviews. Ethical approval for the study was provided by Liverpool John Moores University. After being provided with an information sheet which ensured they were fully aware of the aims of the study and interview process, each facilitator was asked to sign a consent form, following which the interviews were conducted. All interviews were audio recorded and lasted about fifteen minutes, during which time facilitators were asked to elaborate on their roles as programme facilitators, how valuable they considered Rainbows to be, any feedback they were aware of from parents, and any potential improvements they would suggest for Rainbows in the future.

The total number of participants for this part of the study was 4 facilitators across 3 schools. While this was less that initially anticipated, it still provided the opportunity to explore the opinions of facilitators regarding the value of Rainbows, and for the researcher to identify common themes in their accounts.

Findings and Analysis

Facilitators' responses were analysed using thematic analysis, this involved organising the responses of each facilitator into themes according to their content and identifying common themes or ideas within each theme. Through this process some clear findings emerged.

The first theme that emerged was how Rainbows came to exist in each school and how the facilitators viewed their role within Rainbows. The facilitators found themselves involved in their current roles in a number of different ways - some through interest, some through duty within their role as pastoral staff members. However, all the schools seemed to have adopted Rainbows due to an existing ethos in the school, where a common priority was placed on the wellbeing of the children, and the understanding that in order for effective learning to take place the children must be emotionally supported. In all cases, the facilitators interviewed where the sole providers of their specific programme. In the case of School 3 where two facilitators responded, one was responsible for Sunbeams and the other for Rainbows, so while they were able to offer some degree of support to one another they were not fully able to work in tandem. With regards to their individual roles, the sentiments of all facilitators who took part in this research can be summarised by a comment made by Facilitator B (School 2); "I do everything really."

The second theme to emerge was the perceived value of the programme regarding the effects it has on children. 100% of facilitators interviewed commented on the very high value they

placed on Rainbows as a support service for children experiencing loss. One facilitator chose to describe Rainbows as a "God send" (Facilitator B, School 2), while another (Facilitator C, School 3) described it as "extremely valuable". One facilitator (Facilitator A, School 1) paid special regard to the use of journals in their experience, saying that they felt that using journals allowed the children to express their feelings in an individual way, and allowed them each to reach a unique level of closure, rather than striving to do so as a group effort. Other observations that were made regarding the effects of the Rainbows programme on children were in their social, emotional, and behavioural development. This was commented on at a very personal level by one participant (Facilitator D, School 3), who commented on the effects they had witnessed in their daughter after she had taken part in Rainbows. These effects included an increase in confidence and emotional awareness, as well as a willingness to talk about the loss they had experienced. The same facilitator gave another example of this, which she had witnessed in practice rather than in their personal life. As a classroom teacher as well as a Rainbows facilitator, they had the rare opportunity to see children on both sides of the programme, both within and outside it. She described how one child was able to identify when negative emotions were starting to arise, and distance themselves from situations enough to ask to see a member of staff, to express those emotions healthily and then to return to their learning with a clear state of mind.

The third theme related to feedback facilitators had received from parents of children in the programme. Where this was applicable and the facilitator had been able to collect some feedback from parents, which in this case was in 50% of cases, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. However, it is worth noting that facilitators remarked on how informal most of the feedback was, often being given in passing at the end of Rainbows sessions or when they had

met parents on the playground, rather than at the request of the programme co-ordinators or facilitators. While in this instance most of the feedback was positive, it may be the case that parents who have been dissatisfied with the process, or feel that their child needs continued support, have felt unable to share those feelings through a lack of formal feedback opportunities.

Finally, facilitators were asked to consider any potential improvements to the Rainbows programme. This divided the sample, with 50% stating that they felt nothing needed to change within Rainbows, and 50% offering suggestions. One facilitator (Facilitator B, School 2) made the suggestion that the programme should be divided into two parts; one which covers the loss of a family member by relationship breakdown, and the other which covers the death of a loved one or family member. This model is currently in use where Rainbows operates in Ireland, and so it would be interesting to compare the two models and see how the perceived values of the two differ. Another suggestion regards the number of trained staff on each site. In some cases, there were several Rainbows trained members of staff at each school, and yet only one facilitator currently running programmes. This not only places enormous stress onto that individual, but it may also mean that there are many more children in the school not able to receive help because as Facilitator D (School 3) stated each facilitator can only have a restricted number of up to 12 children in each session. One way of addressing this issue and improving the situation for facilitators and children might be to ensure that there is a mandatory number of operating facilitators on each site.

Overall, the study found that facilitators considered the Rainbows programme very valuable, it had particular merit in enabling children to grieve, and to process their emotions as individuals at their own pace, as a collectively. While there is scope for potential improvements to the programme, all the facilitators felt that at its

core, the Rainbows programme provides an excellent structure for a support service.

Conclusion

Before considering the overall conclusions of this research, it must first be considered what areas could be explored in future research. One area that was neglected in this study is the views of children regarding the value of Rainbows. As McClanahan (1998) stresses in their work, the voices of children are often ignored in research surrounding their lives, however when in it is considered it does provide a useful insight into the topic area. If this study were to be repeated, it would be useful to examine the views of children who have taken part in Rainbows in the last 12 months, however this might cause them some distress and so would need to be considered carefully.

In conclusion, this research project has investigated the opinions of Rainbows facilitators regarding the value of the Rainbows programme in supporting children experiencing loss. It did this using semi-structured, individual interviews, involving questions surrounding the facilitator's perception of the value of Rainbows, as well as their awareness of any feedback from parents, and any potential improvements they may recommend for Rainbows. Overall, the responses were extremely positive, with facilitators singing the praises of Rainbows for its ability to improve the confidence and communication skills of children during periods of loss in their lives. There were potential improvements suggested, such as introducing a mandatory minimum number of facilitators in each school, and dividing the programme into two parts. Where feedback from parents was available to facilitators, they shared that that too had been overwhelmingly positive and that Rainbows is appreciated both in school and at home for its work in improving the lives of children during the difficult time that is a period of loss.

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"*I can't do it… yet*": An exploration into 'Mindsets' research and strategies in education.

The role of education within a modern society is pivotal, creating opportunities and opening doors for everyone who has the chance to study. In its current incarnation of league tables, competition and an emphasised importance on attainment through examinations, the UK's educational environment has become volatile and a hive of immense pressure on performance for pupils across all four key stages. As legislation, policy and practice is currently showing no indication of differing away from this, the manner in which pupils learn may have to be altered. This paper aims to explore the concept of intrinsic theories of intelligence – better known as mindsets – and how they may be used to aid in the skills and knowledge acquisition of pupils within the UK's educational system. Drawing from research, most prominently from the USA including Carol Dweck's mindsets research, this paper will consider potential benefits of applying growth mindset practice across both primary and secondary schools, and what steps need to be taken in order to maximise the impact of employing such a practice.

Education through a systematic institutionalised structure such as the National Curriculum within England is complicated. The pure nature of the curriculum aims to apply a blanket cover of knowledgeable content to all pupils within mainstream schooling up until the age of 18 (DfE, 2013). While theoretically, the use of the National Curriculum should create a level playing field for all children, in reality the opposite occurs. The structure favours those more academically '*gifted*' and allows for those pupils who are not as '*traditionally intelligent*' to slip between the cracks, terms used by educators to

14

define if a child will succeed in the academic testing approach of current educational structure (Shumakova, 2018). This is due to legislators viewing learners as one collective body rather than a collection of many differing individuals, a notion referred to by Sir Ken Robinson as the factory model of education; applying a one size fits all approach to schooling, regardless of the fact of whether or not the size actually does fit (Robinson, 2006). Despite multiple calls to abolish or at least radically alter the National Curriculum (Robinson, 2006; Alexander, 2012; Brundrett, 2012) the basic structure remains in piece. If legislators seemingly will not alter the content of the National Curriculum, the manner in which the National Curriculum is taught and learnt should be altered in order to level out the playing field of having such rigid structures in place within education.

The educational environment is constantly evolving with new policies, legislation, and initiatives being introduced on a regular basis. Arguably, one of the most radical changes in education came as a result of the Education Reform Act of 1988 (DfE, 1989). With the introduction of this Act, stricter guidelines were introduced to create a uniform education for all pupils. This was done through the introduction of the aforementioned National Curriculum, school league tables, the regulating body OFSTED, and the introduction of standardised testing at the end of Key Stages (DfE, 1989). The standardised testing resulted in a considerable amount of pressure and focus on a narrow range of content to be forced onto students during high stress exam periods; these exam periods challenge pupils to prove their knowledge however standardised testing has very little effect when testing intelligence or even the range of what children know. .

Within current education a model critiqued by Paulo Friere as 'a banking system" can be frequently observed. Here a knowledgeable individual such as the teacher deposits knowledge onto less knowledgeable individuals for retrieval later on in their educational

career (Freire as cited in Walsh, 2014). This creates a very limited way of teaching often referred to as *teaching to the test* where students are primarily taught what they need to know in order to pass a test (Powel, 2012). This approach to educating is beneficial only to individuals who possess the sort of intelligence that can handle the delivery and recall of academic information such as logical-mathematical and linguistic (Gardener cited in Sulaiman, 2008). While Gardener's theory of multiple intelligences does not provide reasoning to the relationship between intelligence and knowledge, it does suggest that different intelligences handle the acquisition of knowledge and their perception of their own knowledge differently.

Gardener is not the only individual to develop theories on differing types of intelligence and differing perceptions of personal knowledge. Since the initial publication of her pioneering research into mindsets, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Carol Dweck has caused the domain to gain a cult following within the education world; promising that through hard work and motivation anyone regardless of age, gender and socio-economic factors holds the ability to change the way they think and perceive challenges (Dweck, 2006). After an observational study looking into how children react to challenging situations, Dweck discovered that when faced with such a task children would either give up and not attempt the challenge or accept the task as it would test and ultimately improve their knowledge and understanding (Dweck, 1999).

Social Psychology is a domain within psychology that has a more weighted footing in the history of the science, when compared to cognitive and behavioural psychology, dating back to the mid nineteenth century (Crisp, 2015). The practice aims to explore the conscious and social world and its interactions within the physical material world; interactions such as peer-to-peer exchanges, mob-mentality, and personal motivation (Farr, 1991). Carol Dweck, a lecturer at Stanford University and a key figurehead within the

domain of social psychology, focused the majority of her research career on social development, personality types and traits, and motivation (Dweck, 2006). A known collaborator of Dweck, Ellen Leggett, started research into the concept of intelligence; developing the idea of entity and incremental theories of intelligence (Dweck & Legget, 1988). Leggett identified that students possess one of two different views on intelligence; it is either a fixed entity, or it is an incremental fluid concept that can be changed. Building upon the work of Legget, Dweck wanted to explore the reasoning behind these views on intelligence, leading to the theorising and development of implicit theories of intelligence and mindset theory (Dweck, 2006).

An implicit theory of intelligence acknowledges that pupils view intelligence as either *entity* or *incremental* however Dweck theorises that these views are as a direct result of how they view their own intelligence. Dweck proposed that an individual possess a certain way of thinking about knowledge and how it works; these ways of thinking are known as mindsets. Fixed Mindset (FMS) relates to the entity understanding of intelligence in that individuals who possess a FMS see their intelligence as fixed and predetermined; an individual is born smart and that's the way it is meant to be. Growth Mindset (GMS) associates itself with the incremental approach to intelligence; individuals who operate with a GMS see their intelligence as a practicable skill that can be improved upon (Dweck, 2017; Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017; Claro, Paunesku & Dweck, 2016). The rationale behind the validity of GMS is that the brain is a muscle, and like other muscles it can be made 'stronger' with practise and training (Dweck cited in Macnamara & Rupani, 2017).

Being the principle focus of Dweck's research, a high profile American researcher, implicit theories were an exclusive concept to the USA until Dweck's work received prominent widespread recognition during the late 90s and early 00s. Within the UK, implicit theories of intelligence started to gain prominence throughout

mainstream UK education settings during the mid 2000s under New Labour's drive to encourage inclusive practice and learning across the education system. New Labour held the belief that education should be an equalising tool and for the working class to reach equal opportunities as the rest of society. This political drive was revoked under the Coalition government and subsequent Conservative government as funding into educational research was all but pulled from public spending, and educational policy shifted futher towards neo-liberal and performance driven focus (Whiteley, 2012). The Conservative neo-liberal drive resulted in education, excluding in Scotland, taking an attainment driven exam-centric model where on-the-day performance in exams determined education success. It was suggested through the adoption of growth mindset within a school's ethos however, that pupils could be more likely to develop the skills which will best aid them with preparation for exams as well as lifelong learning skills (Gov.uk, 2018)

One prominent school within England that has successfully made growth mindset a founding principle is School 21, a school in East London that caters for pupils across all key stages from age four to age eighteen. Developed as part of the London 2012 Olympics legacy promise, the school operates on six attributes that it believes ensures a successful education for the 21st century (Lee, 2015). These attributes, which coincide with the foundations of intrinsic theories of intelligence, are; Eloquence, Spark, Professionalism, Grit, Craftsmanship, and Expertise (School 21, 2019). While all six of these attributes can be drawn to a practice that encourages GMS, the *Expertise* attribute encompasses the most fundamental of the GMS characteristics; practise makes perfect. Within the practice of mindset, Dweck has coined a *catch phrase* that summarises the core value; "I can't do it… yet" (Dweck, 2014). Within School 21 pupils operate under this *catch phrase* and are encouraged to practise until a level of expertise has been met. In addition to this, students are

praised for effort rather than achievement, coinciding with the brain as a muscle that can be flexed findings of Macnamara & Rupani (2017). This reinforces the notion that the effort they are putting into their work is more valuable than the graded outcome.

Measures to be put in place for the teachings of oracy as an allocated period of the day. The adoption of a growth mindset, demonstrated by School 21, as a school ethos has been shown to aid in the performance of pupils within mainstream education. While it may be easy to view this flagship as an exception or pipe dream of what education could be, other radical approaches to education have demonstrated that radical practices can become a societal norm within education. Democratically driven Summerhill School (Stronach & Piper, 2008) allowed for pupils to input into the administrative and function of the school itself; from this radical approach the majority of schools both primary and secondary developed student councils (Aarons, 2009). If student councils have demonstrated anything, it is that what may be viewed as radical may become a feature of modern education. Growth mindset and School 21 may follow the way of Summerhill and may start to feed in to the larger widespread mainstream educational setting.

It is not uncommon for changes within educational practice to come about as a result of a policy intervention. Interventions usually consist of an introduction of a new scheme that alters the way in which learning occurs and can result in the development of new and permanent changes in practices and policies based on varying levels of evidence. Mindset, interventions are, to some extent, very manufactured and potentially unnatural in development and implementation. The main beneficial aspect that can be drawn from the manufactured nature of interventions is the potential acquisition of research data, high in ecological validity; an occurrence that would be near impossible to achieve under the highly controlled variables of lab setting research (Andrade, 2018). One piece of research

conducted by Andersen & Nielsen (2016) looked into the implementation of a reading intervention amongst one thousand five hundred second grade Danish pupils. The intervention involved parents reading with their children on a regular basis and, depending on the control or treatment group trial, rewarding them with process praise over performance praise. In addition to this, a reading journal was utilised to note down occurrences of reading and to act as a method of communication between teachers and parents. After children read ten times, they would be rewarded with a sticker. At the end of the intervention the class with the most stickers would win a prize. As a result of this intervention, participants in the treatment trial demonstrated a drastically advanced use of linguistic application both verbally and written after three months of intervention, and still improving up until seven months (Andersen & Nielsen, 2016). While this study shows no indication of whether or not the children developed a growth mindset, it does demonstrate the ability of improving skills through persistent practise – a key element of a growth mindset.

Interventions as a manner of enabling growth mindset could be praised in their potential for wide spread applications. Additionally, growth mindset interventions are a relatively cost effective way of bringing about change in practice, an aspect that is pivotal within restrictive budget of modern education (Hepburn, 2018). Interventions enable large groups to be exposed to the practices of growth mindset with relative ease and minimal set up. However, there is no guarantee that all teachers demonstrating the practices of growth mindset are doing so in an effective and beneficial way. This may be due to their own personal beliefs about mindset, their willingness to adopt the intervention or ultimately not receiving sufficient training on how to run the intervention itself. In order to ensure that mindset is encouraged successfully within the UKs education system, and in a manner that is not at risk of damaging the

ways in which pupils already learn, precise and direct training could be a potential solution.

Education, its policies, and its practices are ever changing; updating and developing in a constant strive to *improve* the quality and standards of learning that occurs. Intrinsic theories of intelligence are no exception to the practice of improvements and developments. Since this initial conception in 1988 as a result of research into entity and incremental forms of intelligence (Dweck & Legget, 1988), the theory has progressively developed to explore new elements such as socialisers influence (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017), socio-economic factors (Claro, Paunesku & Dweck, 2016), and how peoples' perceived views of intelligence impact their interactions with others (Macnamara & Rupani, 2017). While the theory itself has continuously developed, the incorporation of the practice into mainstream classrooms has faced a stalemate; reaching little more than discussion in alternative teaching approaches, and occasionally being incorporated into radical methods of schooling such as School 21 (Lee, 2015).

The emergence of research data as a result of the developing theory has led to the formation of potential advisories that could, if implemented, progress and improve the ways in which growth mindset is practised within schools. One aspect of the theory is the role of 'socialisers'. Socialisers are pivotal in bringing about personal changes in understanding of intelligence; enabling individuals to adopt certain behaviours and characteristics that align with given mindsets (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017). However, socialisers are only beneficial in promoting a growth mindset if they interact in a constructive manner. A way of ensuring this would be through the training of mindset practice either during initial teacher training or continuing professional development.

The debate surrounding the purpose of education is nearly as old as education itself. Tracing back to the peripatetic philosophical schools of Ancient Greece, Aristotle and Plato formed their academies on the doctrine of wanting to explore the deeper-rooted questions within society as well as striving to develop a further understanding of intelligence (Natali & Hutchinson, 2013). From an Aristotelian and Platonic approach, knowledge and intelligence are two separate *entities*; any man poses a certain level of intelligence but only those highest in society have the intelligence to recognise the difference between the two (Hall, 1967). While the notion of intelligence only belonging to those deemed societally worthy remains with the teachings of peripatetic schools, the understanding of the difference between knowledge and intelligence remains ever present to this day.

Intrinsic theories of intelligence have developed in prominence within the UK out of necessity. Since the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 (DfE, 1989), education has progressively expressed increasing amounts of neo-conservative views; favouring performance in traditional subjects and competition over more neo-liberal free choice and inclusive practices. Today the mainstream educational environment is driven by attainment results achieved through standardised testing across the four key stages (Coughlan, 2016; Di Pietro, 2013). In addition to this, the banking model of imparting and retrieving knowledge that may be privileged as the de facto teaching method within schools (Friere & Ramos, 1972) results in students being placed under increasing pressures to display their knowledge; often having a detrimental impact on their physical and mental wellbeing (Kiecolt-Glaser *et al.*, 1984; Sapp, 2014).

A growth mindset is more than just a method of exploring individual intelligence and the development of knowledge and skills; it is a coping mechanism within modern mainstream education. As a result of the increasing reliance on performance driven assessment types,

neo-conservative beliefs build most of the legislation and practice leading to students feeling they have little to no choice in their education. The current Conservative government will continuously introduce neo-conservative approaches to education as it aligns most with their Party's core beliefs, however these beliefs do not align with the purpose of a modern day education system.

Sir Ken Robinson states that the purposes of schools are to prepare children with the applicable skills that will aid them throughout their lifetime (Robinson, 2006). While schools do indeed provide children with skills, these are based on the neo-conservative traditional values of which modern schooling was founded on over one hundred years ago; the three R's (Bartlett & Burton, 2016). Growth mindset, as an applicable skill, teaches individuals regardless of age, gender and socio-economic status that their intelligence is not finite. It is a skill that, with enough practise, can assist pupils to do will despite being within the neo-conservative values of the National Curriculum as well as assisting them to progress on to a life long journey of continuous learning.

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A review of the literature relating to key themes surrounding austerity, poverty, neoliberalism and mental health.

Since the coalition's introduction of austerity policies in 2011/12, there have been many restructures to policies in the UK. McGrath (2016) comments on how the number of households living below the minimum income standard has increased since 2010, with vulnerable people, children and families bearing the brunt. Marmot (2010) writes in the 'Fair Society Healthy Lives Review' that one in ten mothers experience mental health issues during or following pregnancy. He furthers this by adding that women living in poverty are almost five times more likely to suffer from a mental health issue than women in higher income brackets. This paper will analyse these policies and use literature to gain a comprehension of the ways in which this restructuring is impacting children and families. It will also argue that austerity and neoliberalism have affected policy in the UK synchronically. Neoliberalism is a term that refers to a political and economic archetype that emphasises consumerism and individual accountability – stripping governments of responsibility (Chomsky, 1999). In the last twenty years, there has been a partiality towards conservative governments throughout Western Europe and North America (Albert 1993; Lash and Urry 1987). Chomsky (1999) comments that this has brought about a period of austere policies that favour the bourgeoisie and create huge economic and social inequalities. He states that this is done through dismantling social welfare initiatives and public education and pushing through policies that favour free trade, free market and privatisation.

It has been commented by Brown and Wragg (2018) that by 2020, austerity policies will have increased child poverty to its most

excessive level in a generation – with as much as 80% cuts to the state budget for children and adolescent services. Not only has the number of children living in poverty increased, but families are now living much further below the poverty line than those ten years ago (Bradshaw and Keung, 2018). Such immoderate levels of poverty are a violation of children's rights according to Article 27 of the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) that proclaims that states must "provide material assistance and support programs, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing". Article 4 also advocates that states must undertake all appropriate measures to ensure children's rights are being implemented, however, this is not occurring. This is evident in The Supreme Court's ruling that that austerity policies are a breach of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Brown and Wragg, 2018).

Whilst there is research that suggests that poor mental health in children can be provoked by socioeconomic disadvantages (Glazzard and Bligh, 2018), there is a significant gap in research that examines the relationship between austerity and child mental health in the UK. Mental health issues are becoming increasingly prevalent in the UK, with 1 in 6 adults reporting a common mental disorder such as anxiety or depression each week (McManus et al., 2016). The 'No Health Without Mental

Health' strategy (Department of Health, 2013) states that over half of these mental health issues will emerge before an individual reaches the age of fourteen. However, whilst mental health issues make up almost 30 percent of national disease in England, just 13 per cent of NHS funding is going towards mental health services and care (DoH, 2013). This paper will explore the idea that children who suffer with mental health disorders are often unable to reach their full potential in life as they face a disequilibrium of opportunities and chances than children who do not. This directly contradicts Article 6 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989) which

states that children have the right to development, and they should be able to develop to their full potential in all areas. It will do this by examining the relationship between cuts, funding, budgets and children's mental health in the UK.

Bedroom Tax

Buchanan (2014) writes that a BBC analysis of data extracted by social housing providers found that in the prior 12 months, 498,000 social housing tenants had their benefits reduced. Of which, 28 percent had fallen into arrears with their rent for the first time. The figures also showed that approximately 30'000 people have been made to move since the introduction of the bedroom tax. This uprooting of families from their homes is forcing them away from their local networks. This can destroy community cohesion and families may struggle to build meaningful relationships with their local networks as a result. This can be taxing on young children, especially when we consider Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory that advocates that children's development flourishes when their environments have strong connections with one another. Family engagement with child-care settings is paramount for child development (Kendall and Li, 2005). However, when families are being forced to move homes, children can often have to change nurseries, health centres, children's centres, etc. This can lead to families have weak or reduced relations with the child's surrounding settings, which may lead to the child's needs not being communicated properly. For example, if a nursery has a good dialogue with parents, the child's needs are much more likely to be communicated between the two. Moreover, if a parent must change jobs due to a location change, they may have to take a job that has unsociable hours. Parents may be required to work night shifts, which will reduce time spent with children – this can affect a child's proximity and attachment relationship with a parents which can have

profound impacts on children's mental health (Ainsworth and Bell, 1970).

Childcare Reforms

The Coalition government's adherence to austerity has produced reforms to policy goals, instruments and settings in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), which has impacted its affordability, availability and quality (Lewis and West, 2016). This is evident when considering data conducted by the Family and Childcare Trust (2018) that showed childcare prices have increased at two times the right of inflation. Moreover, less than half of councils in England and Wales had enough childcare places for children. Research conducted by Ceeda (2018) analysed figures provided by the DoE, which showed nearly half of all early year settings were receiving less funding that they were in 2013. It is poor families who have suffered most as a result of this reduction, as childcare provided in poor areas look after less privately funded children and consequently rely more on government-funded places and income (Ferguson, 2018). A survey conducted by the Pre-School Learning Alliance (2017) that found that over 60% of nurseries and childminders claimed that the funding for child places did not cover the hourly cost of delivering those places. Whilst inflation continues to increase considerably, ECEC remains underfunded and under-resourced - this has led to a reduction of in quality in early years settings (Brown and Wragg, 2018), which is problematic as quality early years settings can be paramount in determining children's development and mental health in adult years (McGrath, 2016).

Neoliberalism shifts all blame for societal issues away from government and instead places it onto ECEC and schools and insists that education must be improved through placing a substantial emphasis on standardised assessments and monitoring child development (Hursh, 2006). Ball (1994) argues that the data

extracted from standardised testing is used to monitor the effectiveness of settings, which in turn creates a competitive market and treats education as a commodity. In doing this, governments can regulate the economy through education (Kitchin, 2014). Educational neoliberalism encourages children to be competitive and selfish, which creates an undemocratic society that only considers its own needs (Moss and Urban, 2018).

Sure-Start Centres

Sure-Start Centres work with children and families (particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds) with the aim of promoting children's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development (Department for Education and Employment, 1999). According to 4Children (2012), over 400 Sure-Start Centres closed within the initial two years of the coalition government's formation as a response to budget cuts. However, the Sutton Trust (2018) claim that this figure is a massive understatement and the actual figure could be as many as 1000 closures. They comment how this drastic reduction to the number of centres means that support for families is no longer within "pram-pushing distance". This hampers social mobility, which is extremely problematic when considering findings by Colletta (1983) that emphasised the importance of supporting social networks, such as those found at Sure Start Centres, in reducing levels of depression in mothers. The study also found that when mothers were experiencing depression, they were more likely to express negative behaviours, such as indifference, hostility and rejection of their children; all of which could hinder parental attachments with children. Marmot (2010) expresses the value of aiding parents to provide nurturing and supportive home environments. Furthermore, one of the goals of Sure Start work was to provide home visits to families in order to deliver preventative work, a twenty-year longitudinal study by Olds et al. (1999) discovered that households that received regular home visits benefited from better parent/child interactions and

relationship, fewer reports of child neglect and/or abuse, and fewer incidents of anti-social behaviour in children. Without Sure Start, many households are no longer receiving household visits and are not receiving this early-stage preventative work, meaning issues may be left to reach the point of crisis (Bulman, 2018). This can have profound detrimental effects on an individual's mental health as individuals who experience abuse and neglect throughout childhood are much likely than those who do not, to develop mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and addiction in adult life (Horwitz et al., 2001).

Social Services

Neoliberalism has impacted social work practice by embedding capitalist values into the foundations of practice through viewing social work economically and treating it as a market, rather than a service by offering greater choice to service users as though they are consumers (Dominelli, 2010). Efficiency measures and performance indicators are used to monitor spending and profit – this strips states of accountability and places emphasis on privatisation, competitiveness and opens the welfare state up to corporation for profit (Dominelli, 2010). One of the biggest challenges to effective social work today is the lack of funding available (Jordan and Drakeford, 2013), they argue that this social work and policy have been in crisis since 2008. The Association of Director's and Children's Services (2017) reported that there was a £2 billion funding gap in children's social services, resulting in the poorest families suffering most and reaching crisis points. They found that this made for an even greater demand for social work, which social workers (SWs) feel is hindering the quality of work they can deliver.

Much like Sure Start centres, much of what a social worker does is often explicitly linked to preventative work. However, preventative work can be much more difficult to navigate as it moves beyond an

evidence-based practice and instead takes a more philosophical approach to avert problems before they develop or are even visible (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2009).

Early intervention is key when dealing with mental health issues as it prevents significant costs to individuals and families that would entail as a result of a disorder (The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2009). However, this requires SWs to spend a lot of time with service users in order to identify risks before they occur, yet SWs caseloads are ever increasing – causing a multitude of issues. UNISON and Community Care (2016) carried out research on over 2,000 SWs in the UK and found that almost half of all SWs questioned said that their caseloads were 'over the limit'. A further 60 percent felt austerity measures were hampering their ability to 'make a difference' and nearly half finished their days still concerned about their cases.

Research by Ravalier et al. (2018) found that 40 percent of SWs were considering leaving their job due to these pressures. They also observe how a lot of cases of often extremely complex, which makes them very difficult to work with. These issues are having a profound impact on the quality of work social work delivered. Maslach and Jackson (1986) further this by stating that this can lead to burnout where SWs become emotionally exhausted and unable to work effectively with both service users and colleagues. As a result, preventative work is much more difficult to undertake as SWs are often too stressed or busy to use this approach and may often focus on pre-existing problems instead, which are much more difficult to resolve.

Food Poverty

Food insecurity as one of the biggest social issues in the UK today (Purdam et al, 2016). This is "when people do not have the economic, social and physical resources to shop, cook and eat in

order to ensure a sufficient supply of nutritionally appropriate food"
(Purdam et al., 2016, p. 1073). Health experts have cautioned that
food insecurity in the UK may reach the point of a public health
emergency (Taylor-Robinson et al., 2013); with research revealing
that over 500,000 UK citizens used food banks (Cooper and
Dumpleton, 2013). The Trussell Trust (2014) reported there has been
an increasing public reliance on food banks, with their usage
increasing 22-fold since 2010. They observe that many families are
turning to food banks as a last resort after experiencing issues with
welfare. Van Der Horst et al. (2014) acknowledged in their study that
shame and humiliation were the most frequent and emotion reported
by those who used food banks. As established in section one, there
are strong links between feelings of shame and humiliation and poor
mental health consequences. This is especially compelling when
considering research carried out by Elgar et al. (2009) that studied
data extracted from 37 countries and discovered that bullying
amongst children was closely associated with income backgrounds.
Glazzard and Bligh (2018) write how children who are bullied can
experience low self-esteem and confidence, which if not remedied
can manifest into prolific life-long psychological issues such as
anxiety disorders, depression and conduct disorders.

Free school meals are an excellent chance to remedy this child food
insecurity amongst children, however, changes to free school meal
policies under austerity have resulted in an estimated one million
children living in poverty missing out on them (The Children's
Society, 2018).

It has been argued that economic deprivation is obesogenic as low
diet costs can be a key predictor of weight gain (Drewnowski, 2009).
Incidences of poverty such have been linked with obesity (Lantz et
al., 1998). Drewnowski and Spencer (2004) state that this is simply
due to the cost of foods as healthier foods are often more expensive
than unhealthy foods. However, professional chef Anthony Warner

(2017) theorised that obesity in the impoverished is much more psychological, stating that poor people turn to unhealthy foods as a form of stress relief from systematic oppression. He adds that those in politics cannot emphasise with this as they have not experienced poverty themselves and therefore impose policies such as sugar tax which ultimately do not work. Whilst this is only a hypothesis, there has been research to corroborate this relating to emotional overeating. It has been argued that there are clear links between societal inequalities and stress (Marmot, 2004). Research shows high levels of stress and anxiety are associated with increased consumption of high calorie, sweeter, fattier meals and snacks (Gibson, 2006; Oliver and Wardle, 1999). Not only does obesity have adverse physical health outcomes, but it can also lead to mental health issues arising. This is especially problematic as there is strong evidence from the NHS (2011) to suggest that obesity and poor mental health are linked. However, they do state that this is more prevalent in adults and teenagers due to social stigmas around weight that cause low self-esteem, depression and poor body image – that is not to say children cannot be affected. Reilly et al. (2003) report that obesity in children and teenagers can not only lead to detrimental health consequences such as asthma, sleep apnoea, cardiovascular issues and hypertension, but much like in adults, it can also lead to depression and low self-esteem.

Conclusion

This paper has investigated literature relating to key themes surrounding austerity, poverty, neoliberalism and mental health. It has found that government cuts have exacerbated inequalities nested within societal structures, which can lead to a myriad of adverse consequences that can impede children's wellbeing and social and emotional development. As per Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, mental health disorders cannot be explained by just one issue – society's emotional wellbeing is

36

dictated by many complex interlinking issues. However, the evidence indicates that austerity is placing barriers to the most vulnerable people in Britain, those who are already at risk of suffering from mental health issues.

Austerity and neoliberalism have impacted UK policy synchronically. Cuts to services such as Sure Start Centres and Social Services, which have been specifically created to foster child development and protect children's rights, have meant that the most vulnerable children in the UK have not received the support they require – leading to many families reaching a point of crisis. One of the most intriguing findings was the correlation between food insecurity and obesity levels in the UK, that has been increased by austerity. This cannot only have a myriad of physical health consequences both in childhood and later life but can only increase the chances of overall poor mental health, depression and anxiety. All the while, neoliberalism has impacted the social work profession and made it extremely difficult for SWs to provide effective support for those same families. ECEC has been affected similarly, as austerity has impacted the quality of service they are able to deliver as they are extremely underfunded and under-resourced. Whilst mental health has been shown to be a societal issue that requires social solutions, the rhetoric echoed by the UK government's neoliberalist approach ignores this and instead places a large amount of accountability on to poor people. Through cuts to services, the UK government has stripped themselves of accountability and created a baseless foundation for society whereby its most vulnerable members are not supported whilst simultaneously expecting those same members of society to boost economic growth – creating very antithetical expectations.

Recommendations

The most evident recommendation to make is to policy in the UK. For changes to be made, the structural flaws within our society need to be rectified. This can only be done through policies that foster a fairer society where individuals and communities are supported. Policymakers need to recognise the implications of neoliberalist economic policies for inequalities in society and instead of cutting back, they should begin to invest. Not only will investing in families benefit economic growth, but it is also imperative to recognise the social benefits of investing in and improving well-being. It has been well established that the number of children living in poverty will continue to rise austerity measures perpetuate. This will have a plethora of implications for children.

Policymakers should give special considerations to these families when creating policy in order to ensure that they are not been disadvantaged further. There should be a lot more support systems in place to ensure that these families are not slipping through the cracks – this can be not only achieved by policymakers but by local governments and authorities, too. If local communities are able to create and partake in social activities that benefit both children and parents alike, this will not only improve child development but also create community cohesion and safe spaces for like-minded parents to seek comfort, advice or just to socialise. However, whilst this may be possible in some communities, it will be difficult to achieve for a lot, particularly those in deprived areas, if funding to local services continues to get cut.

Not only do policymakers need to resist austerity if a fairer society is going to be achieved, but they also need to begin to give a much greater level of recognition to mental health issues in the UK. Despite government publications such as the No Health Without Mental Health (Department of Health, 2015), mental health is still a prevailing issue. That being said, in January the NHS (2019) published its 'Ten Year Strategy' which states governments intent to

increase spending on mental health services by over £2 billion per year, as well as promising access to timely crisis support that can be accessed 24 hours a day and delivering local community mental health support for those with serious mental health issues. Whilst this will be extremely beneficial to those suffering from mental health issues if delivered, it is still too early to assess whether it is being implemented and how effective it is if so. However, it is still an extremely important step in the right direction.

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